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*The April number of THE SMART SET will contain:
"The Notorious Sir Charles Gratwicke," by the Baroness von Hutten*

INTERESTING

To our Readers:

Commencing with this issue of "THE SMART SET" (the first number of its fifth year), the subscription price is reduced to \$2.50 per annum. We are moved to this by two reasons:

First, the extraordinary circulation which the magazine has attained enables it to be produced at considerably less cost per copy than at the beginning.

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Among the other contributors to the April number will be Richard Le Gallienne, Lilian Quiller-Couch, Bliss Carman, Zona Gale and Elliott Flower

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THE INTERFERENCE OF MISS JANE

By Robert Adger Bowen

S HE had met his proposition with silence, and as yet he understood her so little that an uncomfortable doubt was tormenting him as to whether he had offended her. She was a puzzle to him—a puzzle, however, that he found charming in its gradual solution, and he waited now with commendable patience until she should answer him.

They had reached the bridge over the little creek. The brief Southern twilight was in the moment of its change, though through it there were yet transfused the colors of the sunset. When Barbara spoke, her voice seemed to Cameron to have caught something of the elemental stillness about them.

"I cannot see it just as you wish me to see it," she said. "You make us independent by the purchase money of the place, and then you ask us to stay on here after the time specified that we should do so has passed. You are very kind, and very persuasive, but do you think you really mean it?"

"Absolutely," he answered, looking into the eyes she turned to him, and smiling at the contradiction to her words which he read in them.

"Because," she said, sighing, "the temptation to stay on just a little while longer than we intended is very great."

Possibly, what Cameron liked best about this girl, who wore her beauty as simply as she wore her gowns, was a habit she had of saying what was on her mind. Her reticence, now that he

wished her to speak, had the effect of making him more urgent.

"What can I do to make you believe," he said, "that I am asking this as a great favor? How could I live alone in that big old house? Its empty rooms would drive me away in a week."

"How did you intend to live in it when you bought it?" she asked, and something in the slight tilt of her head made him aware that indefinite suggestions would not avail with her.

"I did not know what it would be like here," he replied, truthfully. "You know our Northern farms are snug little things, all green grass and smiles, and more green grass and smiles just next door, over a low stone wall. I never counted on this isolation, where the nearest neighbor is miles away. And then, you see, I had not learned to know you, and your mother, and your aunt. Really, if you go away now and leave me here alone, I must drop it and go, too."

"But you told me you were seeking seclusion."

"Seclusion is not desolation," he said.

"So you would be desolate here?"

It had long been one of the principles of Cameron's philosophy not to wax too confidential with an attractive woman. He had found it the surest way to pool his individuality so that he might expect to receive it again in provokingly muddled general applications; and he was the kind of

man that women were fond of analyzing. But with Barbara Walsingham he intuitively felt that it would be different. The quality of her sympathy was so little feline.

He watched her profile, and noted the stiffening in the lines of her bare throat, brought there by sensitive protest at his blunder. She was looking at the far-off pine forests that loomed up dark with a suggestion of impenetrable mystery just beyond the low hills where the meadows broke their level in ascending undulations. Almost perceptibly the dusk was spreading from them over the lowlands.

"You did not know that I was a writer of books?" he asked, determined that he would make an open bid for her interest. He had expected surprise, but the frank incredulity that leaped to her eyes as she faced him suddenly, was almost discouraging to one whom success had left very humble.

"No," she replied, "I did not. You will think me very ignorant."

"Hardly," he said, drily.

"You were going to tell me something, were you not?" Barbara asked, after a moment. "Do you know, I have never met an author before, and I think it rather startled me."

"That would be a very safe premonition if you ran the chance of meeting many. They are a rather prosy lot, generally; but I was not going to ask you to let me read you anything of my own."

"But you will do so, all the same." Her quiet assumption nettled him absurdly. "That is," she added, "I really hope you will."

"No," he said, so sternly that Barbara quite forgot to watch her landscape, and turned her attention fully upon him; "that is a thing I never do. Nor do I ever speak of my work, as a general thing, but I wanted to speak of it to you."

In the dusk he could see the changing lights that made her eyes inscrutable. For a brief space, the suspicion flashed through him that this woman

also was ready to analyze him upon any confession he might make. The next instant he repelled the idea.

"I can't deny," he went on, "that I am, I don't quite know how, a successful story-writer; which means, you know, that the great, hungry public thinks it likes my books. It does not at all mean that it ought to like them. Now, may I confess something to you?"

"Yes," she replied, sitting down on the low sleeper that held the planks of the bridge in place, and motioning him to do the same. "But I think you are laughing at me just a little."

"At you? At myself, maybe; at the public, yes. I never laugh at my inspiration. But this is what I wished to say. My first book I consider a lucky accident. The second was a skilful throw in the same direction. The third my public wrote. I have determined that the fourth shall be my own. That is why I bought an old plantation 'way down here; and that is why I want to stay here, free from care and buried to the world; and if you and your mother will just stay, too, I shall be very happy."

Barbara shook her head.

"To begin with, you are not speaking quite seriously."

"A little flippantly of what is done and past," he acknowledged, "but seriously enough of what is to come. I am in flight from the temptation of success. Do you know that sometimes death comes that way?"

Barbara was vaguely conscious that strength in its weakness was making an appeal to her. She was not the first woman who had felt the power of this appeal. That Cameron was not aware of its value made it all the stronger. He knew that women instinctively gave him their interest and sympathy, but he was entirely unaware that he won it from them by what one of them had once called "the fine chastity of his spirit." Barbara felt this now, and it moved her as no touch of passion on his part could have done.

She spoke very slowly, the thrill in her voice emphasizing its soft accents.

"If I thought that I might really help you, make it easier for you to live your own life!"

"How quick you are to understand me! Your very presence is a help to me—an inspiration."

"How?"

"Because you are unlike any woman I have ever known."

Her next question took him a little aback.

"What has been your inspiration for the other books?"

"You are unjust," he retorted. "Do you think that I wish to use you as a painter employs a model? I should not attempt to put you in my book, except as I might put the very best of myself, or the spirit of whatever was truest about me as I wrote."

"Tell me about your writing," she asked; and the tones of her voice implied a plea for his forgiveness, also.

"There is nothing to tell," he answered, drawing away from her. "I have no theories, and write just as well on my lap as on a table."

Barbara's rejoinder was a trifle irrelevant.

"It is getting quite dark," she said; "let us go in."

When they had gone a little way in silence, and he had offered her his hand over the split log across the brawling little brook, which she had not cared to take, and they were in the damp, low road again, he said:

"If you only knew the horror I have of being lionized, you would not be angry with me."

"And if you only knew how often I have wanted to meet a famous author, you would have been more tolerant of my curiosity."

"Famous!" He repeated the word, meditatively. "I do not think I have ever heard that said of me. It is too much. Fame is the seventh heaven of authorship."

"You said you were successful."

"That, in these days, is only the first heaven," he answered, with a

touch of scorn. "It is won by accident, and held by advertising."

Barbara turned to him with a gesture of dissent, but she checked the words on her lips. For some reason, he evidently did not care to be serious with her upon the subject of his writings, and she would not ask him anything more.

Cameron also was silent. He realized that he had behaved like a bear, and, moreover, he realized that, if he wished sincerity from her, he would have to be sincere himself. But this was not easy. He never had been quite able to understand the distaste he always felt to discuss his authorship. He knew that it did not come from any lack of pleasure in finding his books appreciated. He enjoyed that with a very healthy degree of interest. He had broached the subject with Barbara, thinking to arouse her sympathy, and to prevail upon her to acquiesce in his wishes, but he had only raised a chilly feeling of antagonism between them.

They had passed from the bottomlands, and were going up the hill road between the upland stretches of fields. There was through the air the uncertain silvery radiance of a moon as yet unseen above distant masses of woods, while the silence that had brooded so heavy in the bottoms was broken now by sounds of life from scattered cabins, or the call of some night-bird to its mate.

Cameron's reticence slipped from him. In the moment, he forgot any disparity of experience between himself and Barbara. He was aware that his present mood was due in large measure to his response to the charm of the hour and the surroundings, yet he knew also that he was swaying his mood rather than being swayed by it.

"You will stay and help me?" he asked. "I wish it sincerely."

The original color of his request had taken on a strangely different hue from any he had anticipated. He had already regretted his confidence about himself, and now he had emphasized the personal element in his appeal.

Then, as Barbara hesitated, he emphasized it still more.

"I beg it of you," he pleaded.

The calmness of her voice, as she answered him, seemed to clear a mist from before his eyes.

"Yes. If you wish it sincerely, we will stay for a little while."

II

THE two ladies were sitting where, in Summer, they always sat at that hour—in the wide front hall, through whose open door the April day came in without loss of fragrance from the rose-garden and the magnolias outside.

Miss Jane Walsingham, marking her place in "Pride and Prejudice," laid the book upon her lap, and looked at her sister-in-law severely over her square, gold-rimmed glasses.

"Barbara is wrong, Emeline. I regret to repeat it. You allow the wishes of the girl to influence your moral judgment."

Mrs. Walsingham's frail hands trembled at her knitting.

"Oh, Jane, it was thought for my sentiments and feelings that led Barbara to accept Mr. Cameron's kind offer."

Miss Jane drew herself up indignantly. "Sentiments and feelings are quite out of place in the matter, Emeline."

Mrs. Walsingham sighed.

"Especially when assumed by a young woman to a strange young man," Miss Jane added, grimly.

"Jane!" Mrs. Walsingham's voice shook; she ran her needles through her knitting, and placed it in the basket. "I cannot have you say that of Barbara."

"I have said it;" "Pride and Prejudice" was lifted from her lap, and quite irrelevantly set upon the table; "and I think it."

Mrs. Walsingham's thin cheeks flushed pink. The tears came into her eyes.

"If you really think the child has

acted improperly," she faltered, "of course I shall speak to her."

"You will do nothing of the kind. I spoke to Barbara this morning."

Mrs. Walsingham shook her head, deprecatingly.

"I shouldn't have advised that," she murmured. "What did Barbara say?"

"She said she had not taken me into consideration at all. She implied that it would suit her just as well if I went away alone. Of course, I shall do no such thing."

"You are very good to us, Jane."

Mrs. Walsingham felt vaguely that the remark was not quite apropos, seeing that the place had been Miss Jane's lifelong home, but these contradictions between Barbara and her aunt were sometimes such unpleasant things. And, then, Miss Jane was good, when she had her own way; and, without any conscious sarcasm, in a further process of mental exercise, Mrs. Walsingham remembered that Miss Jane usually had her own way; so the remark was not inapt, after all.

Into this little flight of logic, Miss Jane's high-bred tones broke with a fresh, unpleasant suggestion.

"How do you think Ralph Darcy will feel about it?"

"Should he not be very glad? He and Barbara are such good friends."

Then Miss Jane's indignation found unimpeded flow.

"I declare, Emeline, it is impossible to be patient with you! Good friends, indeed! Was my brother, John Walsingham, only a good friend to you when he challenged St. Julien for less of an interference than this young Cameron has been guilty of? Is it possible that you are determined to shut your eyes to the fact that Ralph Darcy intends to marry Barbara?"

Mrs. Walsingham sat in her chair, rigid. The harsh reference to her dead husband shocked her; but the plain question about Barbara stirred her to unwonted anger.

"Ralph Darcy is a gentleman." There was a ring in her voice at that moment which struck Miss Jane as

curiously like certain tones of Barbara's; and there was no gainsaying her statement. Miss Jane was silent for a minute; then she wheeled her guns.

"I intend that he shall marry Barbara."

"I am sure that you will find no one to thwart your wishes, unless it is Barbara herself."

"Are you? It seems to me that each day proves you more mistaken. Nor had I thought Barbara one to be so easily actuated by worldly considerations."

Mrs. Walsingham rose quickly. She was shaking with nervous excitement, and the pink flush in her cheeks came and went.

"You must not speak so about Barbara. It is not true." Then, with her basket of knitting over her arm, she walked past her sister, who sat incredulously looking at her, and out upon the veranda.

Miss Jane was amazed. She had become so accustomed to stamp her imperious personality upon this gently yielding sister that she never dreamed of open rebellion. With Barbara, it was different. The girl was young, and had her own temper. Emeline had always yielded, even when demurring.

She took up "Pride and Prejudice," and tried to lose herself in the familiar story. She was always reading "Pride and Prejudice;" Barbara once said, because she was prejudiced in favor of pride. For once, however, the well-known words failed to divert; and she ceased reading altogether as a shadow fell over the book from behind her back. She thought it was Emeline come to atone; for it was always Mrs. Walsingham whom Miss Jane expected to make amends when a discussion had gone too far, and too much had been said. But, instead of Mrs. Walsingham, a tall, square-shouldered young fellow in white duck trousers and outing shirt stepped into the hall, and threw his hat upon the table. Miss Jane closed her book without stopping to change her marker.

"Ralph Darcy! What an uncomfortable way you have of startling people!"

"I thought you napping——"

"Napping? In the morning?" she interrupted, indignantly.

Young Darcy laughed, tantalizingly.

"Where is Barbara?" he asked.

"Out," Miss Jane said, laconically, and was sure that he flushed under the tan of his skin.

"I came over to see Cameron's horses, and his automobile. I must impress upon him the necessity of care in speeding it on the main roads until the people hereabout, and their horses, get used to it."

"The negroes are white with dread of it," Miss Jane sternly remarked; she was herself in abject terror of the thing. "It's as much out of place here as its owner," she added.

Darcy rose, quickly. He remembered with a pang that he was in the house of the man of whom they were speaking.

"Sit down," Miss Jane said, sharply. "What are you moving about for? How is everything at Boscobel?"

He sat down again. He was hardly more than a boy yet, despite his twenty-six years, and he had obeyed her ever since he had worn pinafores.

"I know what you are thinking," she said, looking at him squarely, "but blood is thicker than water, and if he has bought this place it can't make me forget whom it really belongs to; so long as a tree holds root in its soil or a nail holds in this house. Sit where you are, and don't get up. Do you think I'm a heathen?"

Darcy laughed, rather unmirthfully. "I wish you had owned the place," he said, bitterly.

"Yes. I should have kept it in the family if I had had to follow the plough myself."

"No!" Darcy spoke with sudden conviction. "Barbara was right. The fret and worry were killing her mother. If she had let me manage everything for her as I wished—but what's the use of all that now?"

Miss Jane longed to say that her

niece seemed willing enough to let some one else manage affairs for her, but there were some things that even Miss Jane hesitated to do, and one of them was to bring into Darcy's dark eyes a certain fire she had seen there once or twice. So she contented herself with watching him, and wondering how Barbara could be so perverse. But, if she did not care to take the whole plunge, she yet found a fearful delight in hovering about the brink.

"What do you think of him, Ralph?"

Miss Jane, as everybody in the county knew, formed her own opinions, and held them. She never for a moment expected to get from Darcy anything but a frank statement of his own. She was startled when he sat up suddenly.

"I think that you misjudge him greatly, Miss Jane."

In her surprise, she forgot the danger point.

"You say that?" She gripped the slender arms of the Chippendale chair with an emphatic protest that made the rings stand off from her thin fingers.

"And why not?" he asked; and then she saw the flash in his eyes that she dreaded. As she never stooped to subterfuge, she was silent. In a few moments, she asked:

"You know we are going to stay on here for a while after our time is up?"

"Barbara told me. It's downright kind of Cameron."

After that, Miss Jane, in despair, changed the subject.

Half an hour later, Darcy found Barbara and Cameron down by the lower barn.

"They will never be called anything but bob-tailed, here," Barbara was saying, with reference to Cameron's New York horses, which had just arrived. "For my own part, I would as soon cut off my horses' ears as their tails."

"It is a brutal concession to fashion," Cameron admitted.

"An artificial hastening of the evolution process," said Darcy, drily. Then, fearing lest he should seem cap-

tious, he added, "It does give them an effect, however."

"And that is what mice and men live for beyond those mountains," Cameron smiled, pointing to the distant Blue Ridge, almost turquoise in the sun. A queer sense of aloofness from the life about him swept over him as he realized the total lack of all planned effect in both Darcy and Barbara, the absolute ease of their bearing toward each other, without a touch of the coquetry of fashion or the impertinence of familiarity.

Barbara was fanning herself with her wide-brimmed hat, heedless of possible tan and freckles.

"Why do you decry your world as you do?" she asked Cameron, apparently unconscious that both men were watching her in silence. "You never miss an opportunity to say harsh things about it. Now, I often long to get beyond those mountains. Of course, I should want to come back."

"I never feel the harshness of what you call my world very vividly until I get away from it. New York is like the diamond to the opal of your South. There is something scintillant in the very name, something that makes my moral fiber bristle in spite of myself."

"And you object to bristling?" with an upward glance and a smile that made Darcy wonder whether she was amusing herself with this good-looking Northerner who seemed to have taken such a fancy to them all.

"In spite of myself?—assuredly. It is like keeping your face set to the proper expression of polite interest when bored, you know."

"No," said Barbara, frowning, "I don't. I never look interested unless I am."

"Ah! but you would if you were cut as the diamond," Cameron said, looking at her with frank admiration.

Darcy felt a sudden impatience. He did not know Barbara in this mood of badinage, and it seemed to him that Cameron took the badinage too seriously.

"What are you really talking about, Barbara?" he asked.

She turned her face to him with a flash of surprise, her color deepening.

"Ralph never had any use for jewelry," she said, quickly. Then she pointed where gracefully circling cresscents of black lay thrown against the deepest blue of the sky. "There are some of your buzzards, Mr. Cameron."

A groom, leading a sorrel four-year-old, halted by them as Darcy put out his hand to the mare's neck.

"What do you think of her?" Cameron asked.

Darcy nodded approval of the clean-limbed beauty.

"She's a little off her feed, sir," said the groom. "I'm goin' to give her just a bit of that clover as a relish."

"And to think she has never had a woman on her!" Barbara exclaimed, as the groom went on. "But you said that I might ride her as soon as she forgets the horrors of that box-car in which she came South."

"Oh, you can trust Barbara," Darcy suggested, seeing Cameron hesitate. "She's the only woman I ever rode with who makes it possible for a fellow to feel he needn't worry at all about her."

She beamed upon him. "There now," she said, turning to Cameron, "I couldn't have a better 'character.'"

Cameron bowed in all seriousness. "Meg Merrilies is yours whenever you feel like honoring her."

The notes of laughter that stirred in her eyes darkened. "Suppose the three of us go to-morrow morning, then," she said. "Will you meet us, Ralph, at the Boscobel 'turn-out'?"

To her surprise, Darcy hesitated.

"Of course he will," Cameron volunteered, with quick tact. "I have been promising myself a ride with Darcy for some time."

Then Darcy assented with a smile.

"Come up to the house, Ralph, before you go back," Barbara said, putting on her hat. "I suppose you and Mr. Cameron want to talk horses and crops. I have taught him something about corn and cotton, though he is much more interested in the oats and millet. Ask Ralph to explain to you

about the melilotus and the vetch, Mr. Cameron. For the owner of a plantation, you are woefully ignorant about such things."

When she had gone beyond the curve of the red road, the two men cut across the rolling lands to a distant cotton-field where the negroes were at work.

"You see, I naturally take an interest in the crops," Darcy said, as he led Cameron no easy tramp for unaccustomed feet across the roughly ploughed ground. "I started them all for Barbara, or her mother," he added, with the more positive touch of constraint in his manner which Cameron always found so difficult to overcome. He knew that, with the exception of Miss Jane, Darcy, who, in a way, was not at all concerned with his purchase of Rivoli, disliked it most. He was determined to win his confidence, and here seemed an opportunity for an understanding on an important subject.

"Yes," he said, when he had lighted his pipe, "I am embarrassed a dozen times a day by the feeling that I had no right to buy the plantation in the first place, and that I haven't the right to keep it in the second place."

The set of Darcy's jaw was not encouraging. He suddenly bared his bronzed arms to the elbows, as though he felt unendurable restraint in the touch of his shirt.

"Now, if I had only known how things were here!" Cameron went on, leisurely, keeping easy step with Darcy's agile stride.

"Are you not satisfied with the result?"

Cameron laughed. He was not going to allow himself to be piqued by any curtness of his companion.

"Satisfied! That isn't the question. I am oppressed with a sense of obligation."

Darcy felt a sharp sense of antagonism for this stranger who had with one stroke of the pen wrought such a change in his lifelong relations. The inborn conservatism of the Southern traditions was stubborn within him. It stung his pride, however, to feel that the fact of Cameron's youth and un-

deniable graces made this personal feeling of antagonism keener.

"I do not understand," he said, stiffly. "It was purely a business transaction, to which you have added every consideration of courtesy."

Cameron's face flushed. He threw his blond hair back from his temples by a toss of the head characteristic of him when irritated. Then, as the path which they had reached narrowed where it skirted the damp shade of a ravine, and he stood aside for Darcy to go ahead, their eyes met, and his face cleared.

"What's the use in being so damned disagreeable about it?" he asked, smiling.

"You are right. It is no concern of mine."

"Oh, yes, it is! I know exactly how a fellow must feel to think of losing such neighbors. But they sha'n't go, Darcy, if I can prevent it. I have a sense of having found a home down here with them, and with you."

"Thank you," Darcy said, very coldly. Did Cameron mean to patronize him? he asked himself, with indignant wonder. He was rather shy of sentiment, even in a woman; perhaps, as Miss Jane said, because his nature fused all sentiment into passion.

III

THE next morning, before the sun showed itself above the outlying woods of the place, Barbara and Cameron were on their horses. Meg Merrilies, thoroughbred creature as she was, exhibited no surprise at having Barbara mount her.

"She is a lady, every inch of her," laughed Cameron, as they moved off from the carriage-house, the mare's dainty step betokening pride of race as clearly as that species of pride was ever shown. "Why should I have feared that she would act improperly?"

Barbara leaned forward, and patted the sorrel's neck, and, as she did so, Cameron noted the perfect poise of her figure. Darcy was right. She could

have ridden without the aid of stirrup or pommel. The man watching her felt a sudden quickening of his blood.

"Why did you not tell me before that you cared to ride?" he asked.

"There was nothing to ride."

He bit his lip. Barbara's momentary depression vanished.

"Once, in sheer hunger for a ride, I tried a mule," she said, "but it wasn't at all the same thing, and I walked back."

"But why did not Darcy come for you?"

"Ralph? Oh, he did, often; but that was not just the same thing, either. After all, I suppose it was not the riding that I pined for so much as it was my horse."

"You must let Meg take the place of your horse," he said, as they rode on up the main road, Barbara leading in a brisk canter.

She did not answer, except with the smile that, Cameron had learned, expressed many things. The scent of the early morning, pungent with the odors of the pine forests and the wet mold of the nearer woods, mixed with the breath of the mountains. Barbara turned her glowing eyes to Cameron.

"Did you ever feel as if you had been born to certain fragrances?" she asked, as they galloped along the splendid stretch of beachlike road. "This is one of my primal ecstasies."

"And another?" he asked, leaning close to her.

"There are many others. Wait until the moonlight brings the mocking-birds in May."

They sped on through the Ghost-bottom, and up the slope beyond. Then Barbara suddenly drew rein.

"We shall have it over too quickly," she said, flushing a lovely color.

The words stung Cameron's senses like strong wine. Did she mean them? He laughed aloud in pure lightness of heart.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It is delicious, is it not?"

"Do you find it so? Is the spell of

the old place beginning to work upon you, too?"

"I fear that it has been more potent than that." In spite of himself, his voice took on a richer resonance. He glanced quickly at her face.

"It is a strange spell." She was quite serious. "I believe, when strangers come here first, everything seems rather tame; and then, little by little, they feel the glow of the mountains, and the warm red of the roads, and the dullness becomes living color, and the thing is done."

"How you do love it all!" he said; "but it has never seemed dull to me."

"That is one reason I promised to stay when you asked me to," she went on, clearly, but coloring a little. "I wanted you to learn to like it. I feared, if you were left here alone, you might come to hate it, and sell it, and——"

"And what?"

"I wanted you to keep it."

Something in the sweet seriousness of her manner made Cameron feel as if she were entrusting him with a thing sacred to her.

"I think you need have no fear of that," he said, gently; and Barbara felt in him again that subtle appeal which had stirred her sympathy before.

A turn in the road brought them within sight of Darcy, swinging along on his big bay, one with the horse.

"There is Ralph," Barbara exclaimed. "Isn't he a splendid fellow?"

"He is just the kind of man that a woman would admire," Cameron answered, without hesitation.

"Everybody admires Ralph."

Cameron wondered if the words implied a challenge.

"I believe everybody does," he said, sweetly. "I do, I know."

"Oh, he has his faults," Barbara added, smiling, "and they are, like himself, big and strong; yet it is not of his faults that one thinks in remembering Ralph."

In another moment, Darcy was upon them, and insisted upon taking them back with him to his own place.

"You have been down here too long already," he said to Cameron, "without having been to Boscobel."

Whether the unwonted warmth of Darcy's manner was merely the expression of instinctive hospitality, or his proud reserve was melting under better acquaintance, Cameron did not know. The trio rode on together.

When they reached the house, Barbara, without waiting for an invitation from Darcy, slipped from her saddle to the ground.

"I am going to get some strawberries and cream, Ralph," she called to them, from the end of the deep hall. "I can't possibly wait for something to eat until we get home."

"I think Cindy has breakfast ready for us," Darcy laughed.

"I'll see," she called back, and disappeared.

A few moments later, she threw the long shutters of several windows open, and told them to come in.

"Cindy scouts the idea of its being a breakfast," she said, taking her place before a silver tray, upon which Cameron noted some exquisite old plate, "but I think she was only hinting for my praise at the way she takes care of Ralph."

"I guess that I have broken Cindy's spirit," Darcy returned, looking happily at Barbara. "I cannot make her understand that one lone fellow does not eat as much as a household."

"There are about a dozen eggs, piles of waffles, biscuits, muffins, no end of berries and cream—do you want any more, Mr. Cameron?" Barbara laughed.

"No more; but some of all," Cameron answered, greedily. For the first time, he was entirely of their mood, and now there was no touch about Darcy of anything but a radiant desire to please and be pleased.

"I suppose it is because I am country-born and country-bred," Darcy said, as they went out through the low windows to the veranda again, "but I cannot live in towns, big or little; Charleston or New York, it is the same. A dress-suit galvanizes

me. I feel immodestly alive in a stiff drawing-room. It is all contradiction and unrest to me."

He checked himself suddenly. Perhaps the candid surprise on Cameron's face discouraged him.

"I think I can understand it," the young author hastened to say, with admirably balanced interest and non-chalance, as he lighted a cigarette. "Life in a city is a drug. We all sicken of it until we become addicted to it. Then, though we may hate it, we crave it and even love it. It is, as you say, a contradiction. It is too strong an extract of the human."

"Yes," said Barbara, playing with the head of a fine collie, "people in the country never know one another too well."

"And yet," Darcy resumed, speaking so slowly that it occurred to Cameron he did so with reluctance, "they know the best of one another."

Barbara bent her head against the collie's. Subtly, but perceptibly, Cameron felt the chill of reserve fall upon them.

Darcy took them home by a short-cut through the woods, an old road made for the convenience of the two families when there was much going and coming between the houses, but now scarcely known except to the negroes. As they went over it slowly, Barbara riding alone just ahead, Cameron leaned over and let his hand rest on the back of Darcy's bay. It was a caress by proxy, and so Darcy accepted it.

"You will come over again?" he asked. "I am nearly always on the place, day or night."

"Thanks, I shall. Miss Barbara and I are laying out a tennis-court. Of course, we count on you."

Darcy nodded.

"There is the big road yonder, Barbara," he said, as a sharp twist in their path showed the yellow clay of the beaten road just ahead. "I must leave you here. I have a lot to do to-day."

He went on with them, however, until they came into the open road.

As they galloped off, he suddenly whirled his horse about, and, with his weight resting on one stirrup, turned his body, and looked after them. As he did so, the lines of his mouth stiffened. A moment later, he was riding homeward at a rapid pace.

Meanwhile, Barbara of her own accord was saying to Cameron something that he had more than once wondered how he could learn without asking unwilling questions.

"Ralph is so lonely. It has been four years since he was called back from college by the death of his father, and he has lived alone all that time."

Cameron could not put to her the question that leaped to his mind; but Barbara's next remark amazed him.

"I believe he will never marry, either. I do not know what will become of him when we finally go."

She had never mentioned to Cameron their leaving, since the night she had given her promise to remain. It distressed him to have her do so now, but this regret was swept into abeyance by the whirl of feeling occasioned by her first remark. He glanced at her almost sharply, but there was no doubting her seriousness. There was even a touch of sadness about the droop of her mouth.

"And we talk of feminine intuition," he thought, "and the instinctive coquetry of woman!" He became very grave as he felt the beat of his pulses quicken with the distant surge of a strange joy, indistinct as the tremor of an unrisen sun, yet all-pervasive.

IV

IN spite of the work that he had to do, Darcy, when he swung himself from his horse at the stable door, went up to the house. In the unrest upon him he felt that even to be where Barbara had so recently been would give him a dreary kind of delight. But, as he went into the darkened breakfast-room, from which the servants had already removed all trace of the repast, his mood changed.

He stood for a moment looking about him at the familiar things, the heavy mahogany furniture, the thin, old silver, the rare colored prints of fox-hunt and game-stalking that his father had loved, the empty vases on the mantel, the general air of cheerlessness now that the sunlight was barred out by the closed shutters. It was a room that showed the absence of the feminine touch. He sighed involuntarily, and turned away.

An old negress in a purple calico dress and plaid bandanna was in the hall, dusting the fowling-pieces and the swords that hung there. It was so unusual for Darcy to be in-doors at this hour that she dropped him a surprised curtsey as he passed across the hall to his own room at the other end of the house. There he threw off the riding-clothes he wore, and put on his usual Summer dress of white trousers and outing shirt. Suddenly, he threw his wide shoulders back with a motion that meant, with him, matured determination.

He went to a curious little work-table which had been his mother's, and lifted its top. Inside there were a number of photographs—not very many, for he did not much care for such things. There were a score or so of his university chums, one or two hideous groups of classes, and one of a group in scant attire which he paused over for a moment, reminiscent of his days of athletic training. He smiled as he realized how far he had drifted from the old enthusiasms and the old associations. Then, in the tissue envelope in which she had given it to him, he found the photograph of Barbara for which he was looking. He had never liked it, for the evanescent charm of Barbara's expression was not in it, any more than the golden lights of her eyes or the bronze shimmer of her hair. Now, however, with the firmness of a new resolve, he studied the face. The tense lines of his mouth relaxed, his lips took on their wonted sensitive fullness, and, crossing the room, he slipped the photograph into a frame that stood on the tall, old-fashioned bureau.

That afternoon, when the high forests hid the sun, and the colors of the mountains began to deepen into purple, Darcy himself saddled his horse, and rode over to Rivoli. Although it was no longer the Walsinghams' place, the habit of a lifetime was so strong that he never questioned the propriety of going there. Moreover, though recognizing the grievance that he cherished against Cameron, Darcy was too frank not to respond to the comradeship so plainly offered him.

When he reached the house, however, he found that Barbara and Cameron had gone away.

"Tie Mazeppa, and come up here on the piazza," Miss Jane called out to him, as he rode by the corner of the house where she and Mrs. Walsingham were sitting with their turkey-tail fans.

"Barbara out?" he asked, when he had done as he was bidden.

"She will be back soon," Mrs. Walsingham said, almost hurriedly.

"If she gets back at all," Miss Jane supplied. "Some of these days she won't."

Darcy stretched himself in the big veranda-chair, and laughed.

"I suppose Cameron has taken her out in his automobile?"

"Yes. Why any reasonable human being prefers that hydraulic ram to a thoroughbred horse is beyond my imagination," said Miss Jane.

"Barbara says it is very fascinating. Possibly, Jane, you would overcome your objection to it if you went out with Mr. Cameron once."

Miss Jane ignored the suggestion, stirring the perfumed air, warm yet with the recent day, by graceful motions of her feather fan.

"You quite broke up our breakfast this morning, Ralph," Mrs. Walsingham was saying, in the gently formal way which seemed to belong to her delicate beauty, "but Barbara was pleased with the breakfast you gave her."

Darcy smiled. "The pleasure was doubly mine," he replied, suppressing a sigh.

"You are a very foolish young man,

Ralph," Miss Jane put in, with apparent irrelevance.

"I guess that's about so, Miss Jane." Darcy drew his legs up, and crossed them. "You've always had a kind of faith in me, though," he added.

She smiled at him. She had been very handsome in her youth, and she admired Darcy sincerely. She was handsome now as she watched him out of her gray eyes.

"Yes," she replied, meditatively. "That's why, I suppose, I take the pains, at my age, to consider you foolish."

Mrs. Walsingham fanned away an imaginary mosquito.

"How fragrant the magnolias and jasmine are to-night!" she murmured.

"That is a little way they have of being, Emeline," said Miss Jane. There was an irritated tone in her voice. "Sometimes, too, it becomes annoying."

"Never to me," Darcy remarked, quickly, but with peculiar incisiveness. "My nature always yields to the influence of fragrance of whatever kind—sense or soul."

Mrs. Walsingham, vaguely conscious that he was championing her, was silent, but Miss Jane laughed softly. All at once she said, with petulant anger:

"It is hard to eradicate, Ralph—that streak of the courtier that cost one of your ancestors his life. Be careful that it doesn't cost you a wife."

"Jane!"

Mrs. Walsingham rose hastily, shocked at this discourtesy, but at a loss for words. She moved toward the stand of potted plants, and hovered about them, aimlessly, turning up their blossoms with her frail fingers. In a few moments she had passed through an open window into the library.

Left alone with Darcy, and the subject already broached, Miss Jane determined on a daring move. She could not see his features very well in the gathering dusk, and the fact gave her an adventitious boldness.

"I do not want Barbara to marry this fellow," she said; imperious in voice and gesture; and, as Darcy made no sign of reply, she asked the deliberate question, "do you?"

It was just as well that she could not see his face, for he was very angry; but the darkness gave him a certain advantage, also. He beat down some of his resentment before he answered.

"I cannot discuss him here, in his own house," he said.

Miss Jane stroked the back of her fan.

"That is all rubbish," she said, after a moment, "and you know it. However, don't discuss him. He is all very well in his way, but we can speak about yourself and Barbara. He does not own her—yet."

"What is there to speak about?"

"Do you intend to give up your own chances with my niece because another man with ten times your means appears upon the scene?"

Darcy leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees and his face on his hands. He could think of nothing to say to this old lady who seemed to know as much about his thoughts as he did himself, and was more willing to speak of them.

"Maybe I have no chances to give up," he suggested, as she waited for his answer.

She did not speak at once, but ran scales with her fingers upon the arms of her chair.

"I believe I am disappointed in you," she said, finally. "You are not so strong as I thought you."

"Don't you think I know it? I hate myself for letting you hold me to the subject, and yet it has a fascination for me. I admit it."

"What are you talking about? You are a genuine puzzle to me."

"Oh, let us drop it!" he said, impatiently sitting up. "I am behaving like a child."

"But we are not going to drop it, just yet." She sat leaning slightly toward him, trying to read his face. "If you had a father, or if Barbara had one, I could hold my tongue and my

peace. In my days, young people did not have to be shaken at each other before they saw their manifest destiny; but, now that I've braved your temper—for you have a temper—and got you down, I am not going to lose my opportunity."

Darcy put his hands behind his head, and leaned back in his chair. He was angry, but curious.

"I have a little fortune," Miss Jane continued, lowering her voice, confidentially. "It is to be yours and Barbara's if you marry; but, for gracious' sake, be in a hurry about it."

There was no mistaking his anger now, although he sat quite still.

"I don't understand you," he said.

"Nor yourself, nor Barbara, nor some one else. Can't you see that Barbara's head is turned by having a man of the world at her heels from morning to night? He puts her in his stories, and reads them to her, and she is flattered. I heard him doing it this morning, on this piazza. He tells her about his travels in Europe and the tropics, and his 'set' in New York, and she takes it all like a second Desdemona; and, of course, if you give up the field, the end is as easy to see as the nose on your face."

Miss Jane had rushed on almost against her will, and she was a little frightened. Darcy did not speak.

"Well?" she asked. In the pause that followed, they could hear the click of the big gate, and the starting of the returning automobile up the front road. Then the sounds of Cameron's voice and Barbara's laughter reached them.

Darcy rose. "Thank you, Miss Jane," he said, and moved to the steps to meet the automobile, leaving the old lady trembling with indignation.

"He'll think of what I've said, all the same," she thought. "At any rate, I've opened his eyes."

As the night was warm and very still, Barbara made old Cæsar place the little individual tea-tables on the veranda outside the French windows of the dining-room, and they had supper

there, the candles upon the table shielded by tall glass cylinders.

"It is the next best thing to eating under the trees," she said, in answer to Cameron's look of surprise at the unfamiliar arrangement. "We get all the odors from the garden and all the breeze that is stirring."

"And all the insects and bats," supplemented Miss Jane, as she handed Cæsar her cup of tea, into which a beetle had just splashed.

"But it's a reminiscence of the old Charleston days, Mr. Cameron," said Mrs. Walsingham, "where we could do such things safely behind the jealousies."

"A custom more honored in the breach than in the observance," quoted Miss Jane, with disgust, as a moth fluttered against her buttered toast.

She had taken a table near Cameron's, and was prompted by a sudden determination to be gracious to him. She noticed that Darcy had moved his table near Barbara.

"You must find us very conservative old ladies," she began, smiling over her berries at the novelist.

Cameron remembered hearing Miss Jane pride herself on being conservative.

"It is one of the chief graces of womanhood, in my eyes," he answered, with perfect truth.

"You make compliments very gracefully," she remarked, looking at him closely. It suddenly occurred to her that she might not have been quite just to this very polite young man.

"It is the grace of sincerity, then," he replied.

His manner, more than the words, pleased Miss Jane, though both carried conviction.

"I didn't know he had it in him," she thought, quickly. "It was time that I opened Ralph's eyes." She glanced at Darcy and Barbara, and, as the satisfied smile came upon her face, turned its fullness upon Cameron.

"You mustn't flatter an old lady too much," she said, looking surprisingly young with the excitement of her little game upon her. "You know the spirit

of coquetry is always latent, even in an old woman."

Cameron, with the feeling of being at some dainty masquerade, laughed softly. He was sitting near the balustrade of the veranda, over which a *Maréchal Niel* in splendid bloom was growing. He broke off a half-blown rose, and handed it to Miss Jane.

"Women do not age where roses are like this," he remarked, playfully serious.

Mrs. Walsingham, at a word from old *Cæsar*, had slipped away. Barbara and Darcy were talking in low tones. Miss Jane smiled again at Cameron. Now that the candles were removed, and the shutters drawn, the night, soft and fragrant, closed about them. The garden lay in somber shadow, with its tall magnolias pointing like spires above the shrubbery.

Miss Jane moved her chair to a more comfortable angle with the slope of the floor, and so suggested her intention of remaining at that end of the veranda for a while.

"Won't you tell me something about New York?" she asked Cameron. "I haven't been North since the war."

A moment later, Barbara and Darcy went down the front steps. Each was conscious of an indefinable change in their relations; but, while it was a change that challenged Darcy to grapple with it and utilize it, to Barbara it brought an unusual nervous reticence.

They walked down the road, turning off from it into a disused carriage drive that wound over a slight elevation between massive oaks.

"Things have not seemed a bit the same," Darcy said, "since you sold the place. You are not the same, yourself."

"How can that be? I feel just the same."

"Do you remember how you felt just after the papers were signed, and before Cameron came?"

"Yes—as if everything had gone. But, when he came, he made everything so different."

Darcy hesitated a moment; then he said, slowly:

"But it has gone, nevertheless."

Barbara sighed. "Yes, so Aunt Jane is always saying, too." Then a sudden irritation with herself made her add: "But you mustn't think I have forgotten it, Ralph." She touched his arm lightly as she spoke.

"I almost thought so," he said, his voice softening wonderfully under the slight caress, "and that was so very unlike you, Barbara."

They turned out of the old road, and followed the path that led to the corner of the fences enclosing the large lawn. When Barbara would have gone through the opening there, out upon the main road, Darcy stopped her.

"Wait," he said, impetuously; "I have something to say to you. Barbara, I love you—I want you to marry me."

She drew her breath sharply.

"I think I have always loved you, but I did not know it until lately. Now"—his voice thrilled with the tremor of strong emotion held in leash—"it is my life that I ask of you, and give to you."

"Oh, Ralph," she moaned, "why must you feel this way toward me?"

"Why?" he repeated; "why?"

"Yes," she whispered, "why? Surely you know that I never dreamed of this—that I do not love you."

She knew in an instant that she had hurt him to the quick.

"Oh, no, not that, Ralph!" she cried. "I do love you. I am proud of you. It makes me wretched to think of leaving you, but I cannot marry you."

He stood before her, silent, but she could feel that his eyes were piercing the night about her face.

"Oh, I am sorry!" she cried, after a moment. "If you would only understand. Why, we are almost like brother and sister!"

Darcy laughed, bitterly.

"Then, I guess that settles it," he said. "It always does in the story-books. There's nothing like an injection of the ridiculous to bring a man to his senses."

Barbara drew herself up indignantly. The whole thing had come

upon her like a bolt from a clear sky. It was not just to seek to put her in the wrong.

"I did not mean to hurt you," she said, "and you know it." There was a little quaver in her voice.

"Oh, Barbara!" was all he said.

Then, suddenly, he stood erect, squaring his shoulders, and listening. Cameron was coming from the house, singing "*La Donna è mobile*," the melody falling clear upon the silence of the night. Darcy's eyes sought Barbara's face. It was very white.

"If I thought that he had come between us," he said, through his set teeth, "I think I could kill him."

"Between us!" Her voice cut him like the lash of a whip. He turned, abruptly, and stood beside her.

Cameron, taking his high note with the ease of a well-trained singer, swept them a stage bow.

"I did not know my audience was so near," he laughed. "What a night for singing!"

"But we must go back," Barbara cried, the sense of weariness upon her almost a sickness. She turned appealingly to Darcy.

"Good night," he said, holding out his hand to her. Then, nodding to Cameron, he turned and strode away toward the house.

As he untied Mazeppa from the hitching-post, he heard the shutter of an upper window pushed back, and Miss Jane's head in a wonderful night-cap looked out over the quiet lawn. He stood close to the horse, resting his face against the animal's head.

"If she speaks to me now, I shall curse her," he muttered.

In a moment, however, she withdrew, bowing the shutter, and Darcy, leaping on his horse, was off down the road at a reckless gallop.

V

For the next few days, Barbara was very unhappy. Darcy did not come to Rivoli, though twice she had seen him ride past, down the back road on

his way to the fields. She knew that he did this in the interest of their crops, for it had been stipulated in the sale of the place that the ungathered crops were to remain Mrs. Walsingham's, and Darcy had long constituted himself their overseer. She was grieved, and also indignant. She was very fond of Darcy; and she disliked being made to feel that she had wounded him against her will. If she had had her own horse, she would have ridden over to Boscobel, and made friends; but she could not easily walk such a distance, and her instincts rebelled against using Meg for the purpose.

She knew also that she had ruffled the sweetness of Cameron's temper, and had to add that to her regrets. He had brought her several chapters of his new story one morning, while she was sitting on the shady side of the veranda, and when she knew her aunt was reading just on the other side of the bowed shutters of the library. She had been almost petulantly critical.

"How did you ever become a popular writer," she asked, "when you have 'well-groomed men' in your stories?"

"It does sound horsey. I never thought of it before." He drew a blue pencil through the words.

"And I don't like your heroine a bit. You are trying to model her upon what you think odd in me. I'm sure she'll kill your novel."

She read on a little further, and then put the manuscript down upon a big green bench.

"It isn't half so interesting to see a book grow as I thought it would be. I don't see what helps you to go on with it."

Cameron's face colored.

"It is often up-hill work," he said, taking up the papers, absurdly discouraged for the moment. "Of course, I should not be boring you with half-baked stuff."

"Oh, it doesn't bore me!" she answered, with detestable politeness, which she doubly hated when she heard Miss Jane's chair softly rocking on the polished floor.

After that, she had had a quarrel with Miss Jane, apropos of nothing in particular; but their high words had sent her aunt to the dark seclusion of Mrs. Walsingham's bedroom, where she bathed her eyes with Mrs. Walsingham's Florida water, and determined to speak to Emeline about Barbara's wilfulness.

When a week had gone by, however, and still Darcy did not come, Barbara began to feel uneasy. She knew his pride and his sensitiveness, that pride and sensitiveness which had made him, as a little fellow, seek a remote corner of the garret where he might have his cry out alone; and she had hurt him in both.

"I shall go to him in the morning," she said to herself, sitting down under one of the several arbors in the garden. "He deserves to have me make up with him."

She leaned her head against the support of the arbor, and looked at the blaze of a scarlet japonica, among the blossoms of which some belated bees were hovering. Just behind it rose the filmy mass of a smoke-bush.

She was so still in the hush of the garden that a young rabbit came out of the undergrowth, and sniffed the evening near her, then bounded away as the gate swung to heavily behind some one coming up the path. She knew that it was Cameron, before he reached a spot that gave him sight of her. As he was lost now and again in the twisting of the paths, he began to sing the "*Salve dimora*." He finished it standing by her side. He had begun it prompted by the aptness of the scene; he finished it forgetful of everything except the girl who sat watching him, her eyes luminous with sympathy.

"Barbara," he asked, sitting down beside her, "can I move you so?"

Their eyes met for the flash of a second.

"It was the music," she answered, paling. "You forget that my emotions are unschooled. I never heard that sung before."

"It was not *all* the music." He

leaned forward to see her face. "Barbara, do you not know what it was—what it is—what it must be to both of us?"

In the tumult of feelings that shook her, she was silent.

"Tell me," he murmured.

"No. I am not sure."

He laughed, softly.

"But I am, Barbara. That light in your lovely eyes is the light of our love!"

She turned to him, suddenly, her face suffused, but her eyes meeting his clearly.

"Neither was *that* all love! You have a very good voice, and the music, you know, is exquisite."

There was no mistaking the smile that leaped from her eyes to her lips, and was gone; but Cameron thought only of the naïve confession.

"You remind me of some deep but pellucid stream," he said, watching her seriously. "There is nothing of the brawling brook of femininity about you. One feels that all your currents flow unto the sea."

"Oh, no!" she cried; "I am full of eddies. Have you forgotten the other morning?"

"No, I have not forgotten. I am partly thinking of that."

"Can't you forget it? I was very horrid."

"You were right," he replied.

Some tone of his voice made her look at him quickly.

"I have torn it all up. You were quite right."

She was genuinely distressed, and he saw it.

"It was the immemorial difference between truth and fiction," he said. "My fingers were toying with a candle, while my soul was aflame with the primal fire."

"But art—surely they say that art is truth." Her voice trembled slightly.

"Only its shadow," he answered, "the echo of feeling."

His face was close to hers as he spoke. Some indefinable sadness stirred her; she shut her eyes, and Cameron drew away.

That night, Barbara sat late at the window of her room. The air was almost oppressively still, warm, and weighted with strong perfumes, but it was not the languor of the night that made her restless. She hardly knew whether she was happy or unhappy, whether she would be altogether happy were it not for thoughts of Darcy.

"That even love should come through pain!" she sighed, leaning her head against the window, and watching the massed shadows of the sleeping garden.

It was strange that in the stirring of her first love her thoughts should have turned so much more to another man than to the one she loved; but the very fact of her love for Cameron seemed to her a disloyalty to Darcy.

"If he only did not care for me in that way!" she said to herself.

She listened to the ecstasy of a mocking-bird singing his passionate music from the ivy-covered chimney of the kitchen. It filled her throat with a spasm of pain. Suddenly, the bird's song ceased, and the silence seemed to vibrate of itself. Then she heard the clear, separate whistles with which the mocker often begins his flight of song.

Barbara waited, and again the sounds came. This time they were answered, and she knew then that the first notes had not come from the bird on the chimney. She heard her name called softly. Darcy was standing in the shadow just within sight of her window.

He called her again before she moved, his voice sounding almost in her ear, so clearly it carried in the silence. Then she turned her head, and saw him. She made him a sign, and moved away from the window. A moment later, she went from her room, through the wide halls, and down the stairs to meet him.

"Oh, Ralph!" she cried, giving him both hands, "I am so glad to see you!" As she spoke, she noticed how serious his face was.

"I did not think of this, Barbara," he said, huskily. "I could not sleep,

and I wanted to be near where you were, so I walked over just to see your windows. When I saw you sitting there, I had to let you know."

"I was thinking of you," she answered, gently. "Why have you stayed away?"

"Why have I come?" His voice was quivering with emotion.

"I was going to you in the morning," she said.

He drew her into the thicker shade of a water-oak. His head was bare, and she could see the sternness of his eyes. His grip on her hand was as firm as steel.

"You are not trifling with me, Barbara?"

"Oh, I am so unhappy about you! I wish I could make you happy."

He did not heed her last words, for, as she spoke, he understood her feeling. The surging of the blood in his veins grew calm. It was almost a sense of relief that he felt for a moment.

"I'm afraid I was rough with you the other night," he said, the modulations of his voice becoming exquisite in the tenderness of atonement.

"I have forgotten that," she replied, simply. "You are always good to me."

"And you have missed me?" he asked, hungry for even the scrap of comfort it would be to hear her say so. He was finding it very hard to be prudent.

"Until I was getting vexed with you."

He had almost forgotten that she had told him she did not love him. He tried to see into her eyes through the darkness, and as he leaned close to her, a stray wisp of her hair fell across his face, and rested on his lips. The tremor that shot through him showed him his danger.

"I must not keep you now," he whispered, and she wondered why his voice had grown suddenly so hoarse, and why he stood away from her.

"But I cannot sleep," she answered, "although I feel better now that I have seen you. The air is almost poisoned with the fragrance of the magnolias.

These deathly hushed nights sometimes frighten me."

"Go in," he implored. "It frightens me, too, Barbara."

She looked at him with quick comprehension. As he stood with his arms tightly folded, she could see the strong muscles swell with his effort at composure. Something akin to awe rose within her as she realized the strength of the struggle in his heart. She put her hand upon his arm.

"Good night," she said, with a caress in her voice that soothed him as by magic. "Go home now and rest, and I shall, too."

She turned to leave him, and stood face to face with Cameron.

"You!" Cameron exclaimed. As he let his arm fall, she saw that he held a pistol in his hand. He glanced quickly beyond her to Darcy, and his face darkened.

For a moment, nobody spoke. All at once, Cameron drew aside, and bowed stiffly.

"Pardon me," he said, and his tone made Barbara's temples throb. "I was awakened by hearing voices. You know," and he turned to Barbara, "I have often spoken of the insecurity of the doors and windows, and I foolishly suspected burglars."

He tried to speak naturally, but his words seemed to him like those of an oft-repeated speech that had become meaningless. Barbara gazed at him, silent with the rush of emotions his manner caused. Darcy sprang between them.

"You seem to demand an explanation," he said, fierce scorn whipping the words from him.

"I have asked none," Cameron answered, coldly.

"But you need one, and you shall have it. A week ago I asked Miss Walsingham to be my wife, and she refused me. I came here to-night to be near her, and, in the kindness of her heart, she came to speak to me."

For an instant, his eyes blazed into Cameron's; then, with a contemptuous curl of his lip, he turned, and walked quickly away.

VI

MISS JANE WALSHINGHAM had the curiosity of her sex, but she had also the honor of her class, and so, when she had become acquainted by chance with what took place that night under the water-oak, the knowledge weighed upon her conscience with undue pressure. She had merely turned lightly in her slumber when Barbara passed her door and went down to meet Darcy, but Cameron's heavier step, going the same way a few minutes later, roused her into interested consciousness. This became overmastering when she heard him enter the drawing-room immediately beneath her, and slip back the bolt of a window with what seemed a horrid stealthiness, and she had sprung out of bed, and gone directly across the hall into Barbara's room. Barbara was not there, but the windows were wide open, and she thought she heard voices. Standing by the window, she caught Cameron's apology and Darcy's fierce explanation, but she had not remained to hear what Cameron and Barbara said after Darcy left. As the days went by, however, a very lively desire grew within her to discover what kind of understanding there was between them. Finally, she determined to ask Barbara point-blank. She was very angry with her about her treatment of Darcy, and the opportunity to speak came one morning when they were alone in the library.

"Barbara," she said, without warning, closing her book, however, with ominous finality, "it is a great disappointment to me that you have rejected Ralph Darcy."

Barbara laid down her pen, but said nothing; so Miss Jane had to open fire again.

"He has not told me that you have, though I see by your face that you are thinking so. You might know that I have not seen him since that night he was here under your window."

Barbara's eyes glowed as she turned them on her aunt, but still she said nothing.

"Neither did I eavesdrop," Miss

Jane snapped, defiantly, "but I overheard. I went into your room to wake you up. I am very sorry that I did, and I got out as quickly as I could; but now I want to know what you are going to do about this young man here."

Miss Jane had seldom been known to propitiate. As a general rule, she gained her victories by force, not by stratagem.

Barbara was silent; she was angry, too.

"I shall marry him, I think," she replied, looking the older lady in the eyes.

"You think!" Miss Jane cried. She twisted the rings on her fingers, hesitating. "What does *he* think?"

"What an uncommonly unladylike person you can be!" Barbara said, with cutting chill. She rose, and moved to the bookcase behind her, turning her back upon her aunt, leaving that lady to wonder angrily whether the sentiment expressed was given as Barbara's opinion alone or as shared by Cameron.

Under the sting of defeat, Miss Jane took refuge in an unworthy platitude.

"I am your father's sister," she quivered, picking up her own novel again, as Barbara left the room after carefully selecting a book—which Miss Jane knew she would never read.

"I have gained nothing," the old lady muttered. "She has her father's temper—which is my own—and her mother's exasperating endurance. I shall go over and see Ralph."

She went that afternoon in the old Rivoli chariot, which was big enough to hold a dozen people.

"I know it isn't very stylish in these days of armor-clad machines," she thought to herself, remembering Cameron's automobile, "but it's dignified, at any rate, and doesn't have to be asked for."

When she reached Boscobel, she went into the house, and moved about the big hall with a flood of reminiscences sweeping over her. She had not been there for years, and she could recall dancing stately minuets upon that floor when her gray hairs had been

brown, and she had been known as the most brilliant beauty of the state. She might even have been the mistress of this hall, had not a momentary pique decided her otherwise. Now she went from object to object, noting the swords, the old-time foils and the ugly fencing-masks, with a strange mixture of reverence, sentiment and curiosity, the silken folds of her silver-gray poplin rustling about her as she moved.

"The very same," she murmured, reaching up to the wall where a quaintly carved ivory riding-whip rested on a rack with others. "I wonder if the boy knows that I gave it to his father!" She took her handkerchief, and wiped the carved handle where some dust had gathered, and then put it back.

When Darcy came in, a few minutes later, bronzed and serious, she was sitting in a spindle-legged chair near the front door, a little nervous about her mission. He handed her a rose he had pulled from its bush as he came into the house.

"Of course, you know why I have come," she said, when he had drawn up a chair near her. "You may think me a very interfering old woman, and even unladylike, as Barbara says, but you won't come near us, and so I came here."

She spoke with a timidity unusual with her that touched Darcy. She had not forgotten the rebuff he had given her when last she spoke to him upon the subject.

"You are very good to me," he said. He had been very sore at heart, and very lonely, and it was pleasant to have her with him now. Besides, he wanted to hear about Barbara.

"I heard all that happened that night," Miss Jane went on, holding the red rose to her face, and smelling its sun-heated fragrance. "I can't tell you how disappointed I am, though I haven't given up hope."

He smiled rather sadly.

"I'm afraid I have—at times."

"That's natural—at times. But at other times?" She smiled very charmingly at him.

He nodded.

"I do not die easily."

"No; your father didn't before you," she said, forgetting herself, and still thinking of the ivory-handled riding-whip, and some other things. "I mean, you inherit tenacity of purpose," she added, quickly, seeing his puzzled eyes.

An awkward silence fell upon them. Miss Jane broke it boldly.

"I tried to find out from Barbara this morning if there was anything between her and Cameron. I'm afraid there is."

Darcy was silent. He brushed the red clay-marks of a dog's paw from his white trousers.

"I suppose it's his money," sighed Miss Jane, looking at his shapely proportions; then, as he frowned slightly, she added, "though I find he has some graces."

"He has many." Darcy's voice was hard, but Miss Jane did not miss the determined ring. "Barbara would not be influenced by his money."

"Perhaps not," she responded, dubiously. "Maybe it's his book."

Darcy smiled again. In spite of himself, he felt better since Miss Jane had put the subject of his thoughts into words, and sympathy was less distasteful in her aggressive way than it might have been in more gentle guise.

"What I wanted to say to you, Ralph," Miss Jane continued, feeling her way carefully, "was that you can't expect Barbara to come seeking you."

"Seeking me!" he repeated.

"Yes; you abandon the field at the first repulse. What's to be gained by that?"

Darcy knit his brows, and thought deeply.

"The repulse was final, I fear. Barbara knows her own mind."

"Not a bit of it," said Miss Jane, forgetting prudence. "No girl with two handsome fellows to choose from ever did know her own mind, and she knows it least just when she has said something which you call 'final.' I was a girl once myself, and I assure you it was easier just to make up my mind

not to marry at all, than it was to decide which one it had to be. It has to be only one, you know," she added, sententiously.

"I cannot feel free now to go to Rivoli."

"On account of Cameron, or Barbara?" Miss Jane asked.

Darcy hesitated. "Cameron, of course," he said, reluctantly.

"I've told you before that you are squeamish. If he can court Barbara in his own house, you surely can do the same. Besides, it isn't altogether his yet, you know."

"I'd feel like a thief," Darcy muttered.

"And what do you consider him, then?" Miss Jane demanded, with rising vehemence; but Darcy's eyes were flashing, and she calmed down.

"It's like playing with gunpowder to do anything with you and Barbara," she murmured, with an aggrieved flush. "I'm sure I am perfectly disinterested in the matter."

Her eyes glanced around the large room, and fell upon the ivory-handled whip quite by chance. With a swift impulse she said:

"I came very near marrying your father, once, Ralph. I have always had a feeling that I have been cheated out of you, and have claimed you accordingly. That's why I interfere so."

Darcy's amazement, and his palpable effort to disguise it, amused Miss Jane.

"Now, you will understand me better," she said. "Of course, I could never explain it to Barbara."

He drew her hand forward, and, bending toward it, kissed the fingers with serious grace.

Miss Jane rose to go.

"I mustn't be caught out after dark in that old carriage," she laughed, gently, her face suffused by a glow that belonged to her past, "or I might reach home in a worse plight than befell Cinderella. I confess I do not see what I can do for you if you won't come courting. Maybe I can get Barbara away somewhere, and break the charm."

She stepped into the carriage with the light grace of a girl, and drew her long skirts after her, smiling upon him.

As the great vehicle lumbered into the main road, some one on a fast-trotting horse dashed by. Miss Jane put her head out of the open window.

"Who was that, Shadrach?" she asked of the coachman. "Was it Mr. Cameron?"

"Yassum," the old man answered. "An' he sho' do bar powerful hard en he stirrups." He turned on the box to look back, and the horses came to a standstill.

"He's going to see Ralph Darcy, as sure as I'm born," Miss Jane said, speaking aloud in her excitement, and turning round on the seat just in time to see Cameron's horse wheel sharply to the right, into the Boscobel road. "I'd give a year of my life to know what that's for!"

Cameron had again acted upon impulse, and, returning from his ride, had gone on up the road instead of passing in at the big gate. There were one or two things he wished to speak to Darcy about in connection with his horses. Several of them were undergoing a process of acclimatization, and were off their feed. It was characteristic of him that he cherished no ill will for the enmity shown him, and he did not understand the intensity of feeling with which Darcy, when he could not like sincerely, could not like at all.

He found Darcy on the veranda, smoking a pipe, and surrounded by his dogs; but, as Cameron dismounted, he came down the steps, gravely polite, if not cordial. Cameron's ease of manner acknowledged no restraint. Darcy did not at once ask him to enter the house, but, when they had talked for some moments about indifferent things, and Cameron lingered, he led him without a word to the veranda.

"You will take supper with me?" he asked.

Cameron assented, glad of the change in his day's programme, for he had missed Darcy more than once during

the past two weeks. He threw aside his hat and crop as Darcy went into the hall, calling to Cindy to set an extra place at the table.

"And, Cindy," Darcy added, as he started back, "I want you to send Ben up to the house, and tell him to make mint juleps until I order him to stop."

After supper, they sat on the veranda, smoking and drinking the juleps. In spite of his desire to be hospitable, Darcy considered the visit an intrusion. Cameron's perfect nonchalance irritated him; he resented the palpable avoidance of any mention of Barbara. The remembrance of his confession to Cameron wrought upon him now with passionate indignation. He revolted from the insincerity of the social amenities that were being forced upon him, and, with a gripping impulse to tell Cameron frankly just how he regarded him, he tossed the straw from his glass, and drank the liquor almost in a breath.

Cameron, sipping through his straw, caught something of the abandon of Darcy's action.

"You set a rapid pace for such a warm night," he observed. "And you do a deuced injustice to a rattling good mixture."

"Ben knows what a julep ought to be," Darcy answered, closing his teeth on the mouthpiece of his pipe, with nervous irritation. "Do you find it warm? Throw off your coat."

"I believe I will," Cameron said. "After all, old man, the freedom of bachelorhood is not to be lightly lost."

Darcy's eyes glowed at him over the fresh glass that Ben placed quietly at his hand.

"Man is such a curiously double-sided animal. The difference between us with our coats on and with our coats off is a fundamental one." Cameron was making himself very comfortable as he spoke, stretching out his legs, and taking deep puffs at his cigar.

"And the man who never takes off the coat of his courtesy?" Darcy asked.

"Ah! you go under the surface. It is a profound anatomy that can separate a man from his clothes."

They smoked, and sipped their juleps in silence, Darcy's restlessness growing upon him.

"I should think you would find it unendurable here," he said, nervousness making the tones of his voice unusually deep.

"I am delightfully comfortable," Cameron answered.

"Is it my fault, or yours, Cameron," Darcy asked, slowly, "that we can't understand each other?"

"I have asked myself the same thing more than once," Cameron replied, with imperturbable good humor.

"Do you mean to say you have a reasonable doubt?"

The other thought a moment before he spoke. He took a long pull on the straws in his glass, and another at his cigar.

"How do you want me to answer that?" he asked, seriously, looking at Darcy.

"Honestly."

"Yours, then," he said, his voice hardening. He began to wonder whether it were worth while trying to propitiate so determined an antagonist. "I realize, of course," he added, "that your opinion will be the reverse."

"I do not wish to be uncivil," Darcy answered, striving to control himself. "Suppose we let it go at that."

But Cameron felt a sudden determination to be argumentative. He took some more sips of a fresh julep.

"Suppose, now that we are on the subject, we exhaust it," he suggested. "That is the best way between friends."

"We are not friends," Darcy ejaculated, sternly.

"I should be sorry to think that."

"Oh, for God's sake be honest about it," Darcy broke out. "I can meet an open foe frankly, but I hate your social hypocrisy."

There was a minute's silence; then: "You have all the damned arrogance

of your class," Cameron said, slightly.

"I like that better. I knew you felt it under your assumption of patronage."

They were sitting erect, with the little table between them. Cameron tossed his cigar out upon the grass. Something in Darcy's words smote him with compunction.

"I can plead guiltless of any intention to patronize," he said, speaking with a thoughtful slowness that to Darcy seemed affected; although he acknowledged the words by saying:

"Then I regret calling it to your notice."

Cameron rose, and took several turns about the veranda. He felt almost assured that it was useless attempting to conciliate Darcy just then, understanding for the first time the basis of the difficulty between them. As he passed the open door of the hall, he met Ben bringing out more juleps, and he determined that he would, at least, discourage any more drinking that night. He was wondering how he could manage this, when his eye fell upon the array of weapons of various kind in the hall.

"Let the drinks weaken a while," he called to Darcy, "and show me your armory."

Darcy swallowed half the contents of his glass, and came forward.

"I didn't know you would be interested in such things," he remarked, as they entered the hall, and he turned on some more lights. "Most of them are rather old. That ugly musket was at Cowpens, and those sabers cut from Bull Run to Appomattox. There are some still older, but I forget their history. As for the swords, some were at Naseby and other battles, while that one before you was my father's during the war."

The Southernism was so naïve that Cameron almost smiled. Instead, however, he looked at Darcy admiringly, for he seemed to have pulled himself together, and conquered his recent inhospitable mood. Cameron rightly gauged the greatness of the effort, and

as Darcy, flushed and handsome, strove now to make amends, meted him a generous liking.

They turned to the lot of old-fashioned foils, and Cameron took one down.

"You fence, of course?" he asked.

"I used to be rather clever at it."

Cameron swished the thin blade through the air.

"What do you say to a bout now?" he suggested.

"I fear I'm rather out of practice. One hasn't much use for such things when he lives alone and seldom sees any other fellows."

"Let us try," Cameron urged, genially. "I used to think it rather good fun, myself, and, if I'm not mistaken, you'll put me to it to defend myself." He ran his eye over Darcy's supple figure.

"If you wish it, certainly," Darcy assented, as he reached for several foils. "It will be pretty warm exercise, though."

They selected weapons to their fancy, and Darcy cleared a wider space on the floor.

As they fenced, it was apparent that they were very well matched, and Darcy's interest, half-hearted at first, quickened with every thrust and parry. Each felt the spur of having his best skill taxed, and, by the close of the first round, the spirit of the game had taken possession of them.

"You are the liveliest antagonist I ever had," Cameron said, as they rested a moment.

Darcy smiled, throwing open his shirt wider at the neck.

"It's almost a pity," Cameron went on, "that such vehemence as yours should be tempered with a button at the end."

Darcy's arm stiffened, and he flashed a look at Cameron.

"The game has the drawback that all serious things have when turned to mimicry," he said, and Cameron felt the sudden chill in his voice.

Darcy's agility was prodigious. He was as skilful as Cameron, who, though alert and nimble, could gain no advan-

tage. In the silence of the house the click of their foils made a sinister sound, and the swiftly changing shadows played over the dark walls with hideous suggestiveness. They paused to rest.

"The next time I challenge you," Cameron said, laughing, "it will be in the cool shadow of some tree." Then, Darcy struck his guard.

Cameron, who was now getting a little impatient, tried to end the bout this time by an impetuosity equal to Darcy's. The game had ceased to be a trial of skill. Suddenly, it flashed upon him that it was no game at all, and, with the knowledge, came the conviction that Darcy was slowly pressing him harder and harder. His pleasure vanished; combativeness seized him. Then, as suddenly, he determined to let it end in an easy victory for Darcy, and he fenced on, awaiting an opportunity that would lend color to his plan. For a swift moment he glanced at Darcy's face, and shuddered.

Just then something sharply struck against the opposite wall, and fell rattling to the floor. Darcy saw that his foil was free of its button. In the next instant, by a quick thrust, the naked weapon cut Cameron's shoulder, the foil flew across the hall, crashing into the glass bookcase, and Darcy, ghastly and trembling, stood looking at Cameron.

"God forgive me," he whispered, his voice thick, "I meant to kill you!"

His eyes fell under the contempt blazing in Cameron's, and, on the instant, Barbara, breathless with running, dashed into the hall, with Ben, wide-eyed and ashen, behind her.

She stood for a miserable moment, looking from one to the other, from Darcy's hidden face to Cameron's stained shirt. Then the latter forced a smile, and came toward her.

"We were having a little fun with the foils," he said, his voice shaken beyond his control, "and an accident happened—merely the conventional pin-scratch."

"You shall not lie for me," Darcy

said. "Barbara, I tried to kill him with a bare foil."

"You, Ralph—in your own house!" Then, without a backward glance, she went over to Cameron.

"You are wounded!" she exclaimed, her lips white as she saw the blood upon his shirt.

"He is hurt far deeper than I am," Cameron whispered, pointing to Darcy. "Go to him."

VII

MISS JANE, under pretext of fatigue, had gone to her room early after supper to think over a plan that had occurred to her. It seemed such a good plan, and so easy to mature, that she wondered she had not thought of it sooner. It had certain elements of the sentimental about it, also, so far as Miss Jane herself was concerned, that appealed to her strongly in her present mood. The only trouble she could foresee was the doubt as to Barbara's pliability.

By the time she had put on her dressing-gown, and covered her gray curls with her nightcap, she had quite made up her mind that the thing should be done. She hesitated only a moment as to whether she should write the letter in the present state of her toilette, or wait until she had on her black silk-and-lace cap.

Among that galaxy of admirers of which Miss Jane had said to Darcy that it had been easier to abandon the whole than to select any particular one, was a young man whose home then and since had been just outside of New York, on the banks of the Hudson. Indeed, but for certain rashly expressed opinions about state rights upon the part of Jerrold Kinaird, which had given Miss Jane pause, and the ensuing outbreak of the war, which had given her impetus, it is very probable that she would have accepted Mr. Kinaird and his Hudson home. She might have had him several times since then, had she so elected; but she prided herself on being one who remained true to her decisions. Every

now and then, however, she received a letter from him. Once he had made her a visit; and every Christmas brought her a large box of American beauty roses from his hothouses.

She wrote:

MY DEAR, DEAR FRIEND,

Your last letter to me was written as you went up the Nile. Since then, so many months have elapsed that you have returned to America, I am sure. From my quiet little corner of the world I have hesitated to write to you who have for so long known the great world in all its parts. And yet, as your thoughts turned to me, down here among my memories, even as you moved through the sublime scenes of antiquity, so, to-night, my thoughts have sent me to my room to spend an hour in writing to you.

"There," said Miss Jane, laying down her pen, "I told that young fellow the other night that coquetry died hard. That sounds a little sonorous, but I am thought to be more old-fashioned than I really am."

She wrote on:

I turn to you, my friend, in an emergency arising in my life. I am sure that you will appreciate the sentiment that enables me to do so—to ask so great a favor of you after the passing of so many years—so many changes!

"That isn't quite right," she thought, "but for the sake of the rest I'll let it stand."

It has become very important, essential to my niece's happiness—and my own—that she should have an entire change of scene just at this time. You know—

She blotted her page, and turned it neatly.

"He ought to know," she said, taking up her pen again. "But I'm not going to tell him I'm asking this favor in behalf of Prioleau Darcy's son—"

You know how a helping hand given at the right moment makes possible the happiness of two lives. Such a time has come to my niece. She needs rest, an hour to think. Could you, my friend, extend to her the invitation so often proffered me, and have her with you for a few weeks at your home? She is an interesting girl. I am sure she will remind you of me.

"She will, too, if he crosses her," she said to herself, smiling finely. Then she went on:

There is a condition attached. You know it is the privilege of beautiful women and old

ladies to ask favors, and then attach conditions! Barbara must never know that I have suggested this to you. She would never forgive me, and, what is worse, she would never go to you. You will write her an invitation as if the thought had originated with you, won't you, my friend?

It was just at this moment that a strange fluttering sound reached Miss Jane's ears. She rushed to the window through instinct, and flung the shutters back. Barbara was speeding down the moonlit road as though for life, closely followed by the dark body of a negro. For a second's space, Miss Jane's tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, then she uttered a horrified scream; but she collected her senses instantly, with an impatient exclamation, and guessed the truth.

"I'm an old fool!" she exclaimed, angrily. "As though Barbara didn't have her own lungs, and wouldn't run away from the house unless there was trouble somewhere else."

She moved about her room nervously, apprehensive lest her scream had been heard; once she started to go to Mrs. Walsingham, but checked herself.

She finished her letter, sealed it and addressed it, and then went to her window and sat down, waiting. In the brilliant moonlight she could see almost to the front gate. She shivered a little at the splendor of the night. All touch of color was lost in the white radiance, except where the oaks towered, masses of blackness, or an occasional leaf gleamed like a piece of burnished metal. When a screech-owl cried in an elm in front of the house, she threw a piece of wood in its direction, and "shoo'd" it vigorously. She was not feeling sentimental now.

It seemed a long time to her before she caught sight of Barbara's and Darcy's white clothes, and then of Cameron, too, as he walked beside them, leading his horse. Barbara was doing all the talking, it appeared. Miss Jane drew behind her curtain as they came nearer, but she saw them stop where the road forked, and Darcy bid them good night. Then Cameron circled the house, leading his horse to the

stables, and Barbara went on to the front steps.

"All done for my benefit, at the instigation of my niece," Miss Jane said, "and very cleverly done, too; but, of course, I can find out all I want to know from Ben for a fifty-cent piece, and close his mouth at the same time."

It was several days later that Miss Jane received an answer to her letter. As she read it in the front hall, she noticed that Barbara also was reading a letter. Miss Jane's heart beat a little. The answer she had received was all she could have desired. As she turned the page, she glanced at her niece, and noticed that she had read her letter, and had laid it in her lap, while she sat thinking.

"Now if she won't go!" thought Miss Jane, reading on.

Of course you know that any wish of yours would meet with instant fulfilment at my hands, if that were possible. You ask me to do a delightful thing, and double the delight by accounting it a favor to yourself. My house is filled with young people, for, after traveling so much, I am not going away this Summer, but the best place in it I shall see is made ready for the niece of my dear friend. We are near enough to the city even to drive in, and I am sure she need not have a dull day.

"Aunt Jane," said Barbara, as that lady slowly folded her letter, and slipped it into its envelope, "I have just had a very kind invitation from Mr. Kinaird to make him a visit, and if I had any clothes I'd be tempted to go. But I'd like to know what made him think of inviting me at all, and especially just at this season."

"He is just back from Egypt, he writes me, and wants to fill his house with young people for the Summer. As for the clothes, I have been intending to make you a present for some time."

"You seem very eager that I should go," Barbara said, a smile playing about the corners of her mouth, "and I believe I will."

She went to find her mother, and Miss Jane sighed comfortably. She was not, however, quite at ease, for a new consideration arose.

"I never thought for a moment of the chance of *his* going," she murmured. "Of course, he will follow her at once. I am sending her right into the camp of the enemy!"

Suddenly, however, she smiled.

"Let him go! He can't see as much of her as he does here, and she will see a great deal more of him, or his kind. That will mean a good deal. And she won't see anything of Ralph for a while, and that will mean a good deal more."

When Barbara came back half an hour later, with her mind made up to go, Miss Jane put down "Pride and Prejudice" with a very pleasant smile, and took up the subject of hats and gowns.

As they were returning on horseback from the village that afternoon, Barbara told Cameron of the plan, and, to her surprise and secret resentment, he seemed delighted.

"You don't seem to be a bit sorry," she said, with quite pardonable pique.

"Sorry! I am overjoyed. It will be such good sport to show you around New York. What a shame, though, that it will be in Summer!"

"You don't mean to say you're going to follow me there?"

"Not at all; I'm going with you."

"Oh!" said Barbara, sitting squarely on her saddle. "But I don't think you are."

"There will be a jolly lot to do, all the same," Cameron went on, "even if it is Summer. We'll take a trip to the seashore with the hoodlums, and I wonder what you will say of Coney Island!"

"Now, look here," she said, holding her reins under her knee as she tightened her hair, "if you say another word about this I'll ride straight back to the village and send a telegram contradicting that letter."

"But, surely," he asked, "what can you expect?"

"I expect you to remain here and miss me very much." She bent over Meg's neck, stroking the beautiful coat. "You must get to work again on your book."

"Oh, hang the book!"

Barbara leaned lightly from her saddle, and watched the dainty action of the mare's legs. She did not wish Cameron to see the smile dimpling her cheeks.

"You will be toppling out of that saddle in a minute," he said, irritated by her manner, and a little uneasy. "I wish you wouldn't be so reckless."

For answer, she let her body sway over almost on a level with the horse's back, righting herself with sinuous ease as Cameron reached forward to catch her.

"Don't," he cried, with unwonted anger. "You remind me of a snake-woman."

"You are rude," she answered, sweetly, "but I forgive you because you were horribly frightened."

After that, they rode on in silence for a little space. Suddenly, Cameron said:

"I know, if you leave me here, Darcy and I shall come to blows."

If he had intended to revenge himself upon her, he was successful. She pulled Meg to an abrupt stop, and turned to him, her face blanching; but it was only for a moment. Then she rode on, determined to show her disapproval, after the manner of women. When they reached the Boscobel "turn-out," she drew rein again.

"Go on home now," she said to him, imperiously. "I am going over to see Ralph, and tell him of my trip."

"Why can't I go, too?" he asked, looking very boyish in his penitence.

"No!"

"I'll be very nice," he pleaded. "Besides, it's getting dark."

"You can wait here and watch me until I am well up the avenue. Then Ralph will ride home with me."

He watched her as she went away at a swift gallop. She waved her hand to him just before a bend in the avenue hid her from his sight. Then, waiting until he felt sure she must have reached the house, and found Darcy, he wheeled his thoroughbred, and trotted off.

Darcy did not take Barbara's news very happily.

"This is Miss Jane's doing, of course," he said, as he stood with his hand on the neck of her horse, from which she did not dismount.

"I suspect it is. She had a very guilty look when I told her I had the invitation. But I really am very glad to have it, Ralph."

"Are you? Then I must be glad, too." He was wondering what Miss Jane had meant by this move, and not finding much comfort in it.

"Maybe you can come on there, too," she suggested. "Mr. Kinaird's is only a few miles from the city."

"I guess Cameron will be doing that," he said, speaking gently, but Barbara saw the muscles of his brawny neck stiffen as they showed above the low collar of his shirt. He looked off across the fields for a moment before he met her eyes.

"I have just told him that he had to stay here and work. That's why he came."

"He is a very fortunate fellow." Darcy ran his strong, brown fingers through Meg's mane.

"To have his work?"

"To have you to command him!"

Barbara winced, and he, looking her in the eyes, saw it. Instantly he took his hand from the mare's neck, as though even so much of an approach were denied him, and Barbara, noticing, not for the first time, the signs of suffering in his eyes and about his mouth, repented quickly.

"I have come to command you. You must take me home."

"Of course," he answered, his blood quickening, "Must you go at once?"

"It is almost dark," she answered, pointing to the distant woods already merging into shapeless shadow.

"But it is so good to have you here," he murmured, his voice falling into its softest accent, "and it is so dreary when you have gone!"

"Then I must not come any more," she whispered, "for it makes me very unhappy to think that you are."

He turned his eyes to hers, smitten with a sudden fear.

"Don't say that, for God's sake!"

he pleaded. "If you knew the misery of my loneliness, and the contempt and shame that face me in everything I do! The only thing that keeps me here is the fact that you do not despise me for what I have done!"

"Hush!" she said, gently, putting her hand upon his bent head. "Don't speak so! He does not despise you. He understands it all."

Darcy raised his head, and threw back his shoulders.

"I am beneath *his* contempt," he exclaimed, with a sad proudness. "It almost gives me pleasure to know that!"

"You are my brave Ralph," she replied, holding out both hands to him. "The hardest thing of all you face like a man!"

"Barbara," he cried, his voice thrilling as he seized her hands and drew near to her, "I could stand anything—his contempt, even my own—if you would love me!"

For an instant, he stood close to her, pressing her hands to his brow, to his breast, to his lips; then he let them go, and stepped back.

"I'll be here in a moment," he said, still with that wonderful music in his voice; and went away to get his horse.

VIII

MRS. DENISON settled herself comfortably among the luxurious cushions of Mr. Kinaird's barouche, and smiled at Barbara from under her lavender sunshade.

"Now, isn't this better than going into the city on the stuffy train? We can take our time, catch what breeze there is, do our wretched errands, and get home again without any tunnels and cinders."

"And see some more of that fearful horseback-riding in the Park," laughed Barbara.

"Our poor academicians! You are so relentless with them! Tell me what you think of Ronald Cameron's horsemanship."

Mrs. Denison looked again at Barbara

from under the extreme edge of the lace of her sunshade.

"He rides well, but I always think of him as riding a cropped-tail horse."

Mrs. Denison smiled, and veiled her amber eyes.

"Your distinctions are always so subtle," she said. "You have a genius for suggestion. Do you know, I think your whole advent among us is delicious, and especially for me, since Ronald and I are such old friends! And you are so refreshing!"

"Really," said Barbara, flushing a little, and smiling, "you speak of me as though I were some islander whose feathers, after all, were worth looking at. Am I so dreadfully unique?"

"Dreadfully! delightfully! I never knew what Homer meant by the 'ox-eyed Juno' until I saw you looking at me."

"And I always detested Juno," sighed Barbara. "She was so cow-like."

"With some men, my dear, she would have been irresistible. She was, I believe, even with that blasé old Jupiter."

Barbara looked up to the backs of the men on the box, and laughed.

"You are cow-like yourself," Mrs. Denison thought, as she leaned back and closed her eyes. "I wonder how irresistible you are to Ronald Cameron!"

She had her own reasons for liking the girl, but she liked her also for disinterested ones. When Barbara had first come, in spite of Mr. Kinaird's affectionate welcome, she had not found it easy to shake off a certain restraint of manner, until Mrs. Denison, just emerging from the gracious gloom of a desirable widowhood, had taken her up, out of interest in the possibilities of her beauty. This interest received a sweeping impetus when it transpired that it was the Walsingham place which Cameron had bought in the South, and retired to in self-banishment.

"And he has been alone down there with this girl, and her eyes, and her hair, for months," she thought, closing

the lids over her own remarkable eyes until they were half hidden. "If they have made any impression on him, he'll follow her here, of course. Until then I'll find out all I can."

She had discovered nothing, however, except that Barbara, with an old-fashioned reserve that was exasperating under the circumstances, would never discuss love-affairs in general, nor her own in particular.

"She isn't a prude, either," Mrs. Denison thought now, watching the broad expanse of the Hudson below them, blue as a sapphire in the clear July sun. "I'm afraid it's simply virtue; but she has the power of a volcano about her, if she only knew." Then she added, with the wicked zest of one whose palate has learned to crave excitements, "I'd like to see her explode."

With this laudable purpose in mind, when they reached the city, she showered upon Barbara all kinds of gifts.

"There are half-a-dozen men out there," she said, when Barbara protested, "who would be quite ready to fall in love with you, if you did not dress so much like a nun."

"But I don't want any falling in love," Barbara declared. "It's such a bother when the weather's hot."

Mrs. Denison's yellow eyes showed glints of darker hue.

"Then you do know something about it, after all?" she laughed, picking out an elaborate fichu. "I'm only talking about Summer love, though. That cools the air, and doesn't really interfere with anything more serious—if there is anything."

She held the chiffon to Barbara's neck and, under pretext of seeing how it became her, scanned the girl's face closely. The warm color she saw mantling there satisfied her. Then they went down to the Waldorf for luncheon.

"It's more like New York than Sherry's," Barbara said, when asked her preference. In some unaccountable way, Mrs. Denison felt provoked.

"New York is kaleidoscopic," she answered. "I suppose you're right."

Later in the day, she found out another thing that somewhat upset her

calculations. As they were passing a Fifth-avenue harness shop, Barbara stopped suddenly.

"I want that bridle," she said, pointing to one in the window.

"It's a man's," Mrs. Denison exclaimed, in her surprise neglecting to be accurate.

"Of course it is," Barbara assented. "That's why I want it."

Mrs. Denison forgot the heat and her fatigue in a new thought.

"Let us go in and get it," she said.

She listened expectantly when the salesman asked to what address it should be sent, and, in her curiosity at what she heard, asked quickly:

"Who is Ralph Darcy?"

She was silent after that, trying to assort this "old friend" in her thoughts, which also included Cameron, whom she had called "an old friend" of her own. It was not an easy matter, and Barbara seemed determinedly uncommunicative.

Mr. Kinaird met Barbara as she came down to dinner. Between them a very pretty affection had grown up, different on his part from anything he felt for his other guests, although he had known them all so much longer. Some new touch about her gown or hair as she came toward him struck him instantly.

"Who is trying to—what is there New York-like about your dress?" he asked, suspiciously, kissing her cheek. He never kissed his other guests.

"I don't like it, either," she laughed. "It's my shoulders."

"So it is, so it is! I must be getting old, indeed, my dear, to need my attention called to them." He bowed with delicate gallantry. "But don't let them make a fashionable woman of you, child," he added, uneasily.

"I don't believe they could, Mr. Kinaird. I don't feel that I belong in this gown at all."

"You belong to all that's beautiful," he replied, "and your gown is perfect."

"And you are not nearly so old as you ought to be," she laughed, laying her hand in his, "or you would not flatter so."

As she left him, and went on down the hall, he watched her with a touch of pain at his heart.

"She is right," he thought. "I am not nearly so old as I ought to be. One generally forgets by the time he is sixty-five."

The click of a high heel behind him made him turn.

"Dreaming, or only hungry?" It was Mrs. Denison, languorous in pale lavender, her yellowish eyes lambent with the hues of rich wine.

"Dreaming and hungry," her host replied, touching the hand she held out to him as she looked about her.

"It is so much wiser to be only the latter," she said, "especially near dinner-time."

"What a Platonist you are!" he returned, with something of severity making itself felt in his manner. Was it wise, he wondered, to let Barbara be so constantly with this woman who knew so much more than she dreamed?

"I've been a maid, a wife, and a widow. Plato himself didn't have that training," she laughed, lightly. "Has Barbara come down? Oh, yes, and do tell me who Ralph Darcy is." She changed an emerald and a diamond on her finger, and looked at the effect carefully.

"Ralph Darcy!" Mr. Kinaird exclaimed. "Who is he?"

"I ask you."

"The name is familiar," he said; "strangely so." He drew his brow together with his fingers. "Why do you ask?"

"Barbara said he was an old friend." The amber eyes expanded, and then closed questioningly.

"Why, to be sure! A youthful friend of my own. Why, we were even—" He checked the confidence suddenly, but Mrs. Denison was already moving away to meet a tall young fellow for whose beaming blue eyes and the tale they told so plainly she had the profoundest contempt.

"Ralph Darcy—Ralph," Mr. Kinaird thought, with puzzled brow. "That is not right. Some odd, family name! Ah! Prioleau Darcy," he said

aloud, going on into the library. "This must be his son, and that vixen has been trying to find out something about Barbara's affairs."

He watched Barbara more closely that evening, feeling, in a vague way, that some process of change was taking place in her life. She held the several men around her by no trace of coquetry, nor with any tremor of excitement. She did not seem to say much, but in some fine way she let none of them feel that he was second in her regard, which came so near to being the true state of things as to require no acting.

He went toward the group, and Barbara made room for him beside her.

"Do you know what they are planning?" she asked. "A coaching-trip to the seashore to-morrow."

"Delightful!" he exclaimed.

"But the trouble is, you see," laughed a Harvard senior, "every man Jack of us insists upon tooling the coach with Miss Walsingham beside him."

"That is rather awkward," Mr. Kinaird assented. "But what does Miss Walsingham say?"

"She is perfectly indifferent," lamented a young fellow, who sometimes wrote verse, and had sat up half the previous night trying to compose a sonnet on Barbara's accent.

"That rules you out, Harry, on the score of faint-heartedness," said an army lieutenant, putting his hand on the poet's shoulder.

Barbara turned laughingly to Mr. Kinaird.

"I have it," she said. "Let it go by seniority."

Mrs. Denison also watched Barbara that evening. She was letting the blue-eyed young man make love to her in a shaded corner, that she might do this the better.

"She doesn't care a rap for any of them," she thought, as she allowed the fledgling to seize her hand, and hold it, "and that means she probably does care for some one else. If she didn't, she'd be less cool."

She mused in silence, managing to

make the stillness very eloquent to her companion, whose low-murmured words did not disturb her at all.

"She is not so Juno-like to-night, and they see it. How quick they are! But she is less dangerous so!"

She went to her room rather early, leaving the blue-eyed young man happily disconsolate, and, remembering the address upon the bridle, sat down at her desk, and wrote a letter to Cameron.

"If I have not lived in vain," she thought, as she stamped the gold sealing-wax with a recently designed crest, "this will bring him on in a hurry, and then we shall see!"

IX

"AND now that you are actually off," said Miss Jane, making herself as comfortable as she dared, so high above the ground as the seat of Cameron's dog-cart, "I wish you would tell me why you are going so suddenly."

Cameron, touching his grays with the whip, sent them away from the front gate with a jerk that dislodged Miss Jane's bonnet.

"There's no need to kill me in the meantime," she exclaimed, half angry and wholly frightened. "It makes me giddy up here, anyway."

"I beg your pardon," he said, smiling, "but you asked to come."

"That's all right," she answered, straightening her hat as best she could with one hand, while she held firmly to the seat with the other, "but you might have taken something less like a trapeze than this thing!"

Since Barbara's departure, there had grown up between the two a mutual liking, which was cemented one day when Cameron had brought Miss Jane some chapters of his story, and asked to read them to her. To return the compliment, in a measure, and also to further her own ends, for she feared every day to hear of his intention to go to New York, she suggested that she read Miss Austen to him. Everything had gone finely until Mrs. Deni-

son's letter arrived. Then, although Miss Jane was just in the middle of "Emma," Cameron decided that he must go north at once.

Now, as he made no answer to her question, she repeated it diplomatically. She was seldom too timid to be rude, when rudeness was the only means left her, but she managed to get an amount of insinuating gentleness into her manner that amused Cameron.

"I have had a letter," he replied, smiling without disguise.

"So I have noted—several, indeed."

"But this one wasn't from Miss Walsingham."

"Oh," she exclaimed, virtuously, "then I have no right to ask you."

She glanced down to the smooth ground as it spun away from under the wheels, almost as though she contemplated leaping to it. Then she shut her eyes, dizzy at the sight.

"Whatever induced me to come!" she murmured.

"You wanted to find out why I was going," he replied, being, in fact, suddenly quite willing to explain to her.

She looked at him sharply, and, seeing that he was serious, her curiosity returned.

"Yes, I did. It was I who got Barbara up there, of course. Now that you are going, too, you might as well know that, and why."

"No; don't," he said, laughing. "It's no use."

"Why?" Her surprise was so genuine that she let go her hold on the seat, and dropped both hands in her lap.

"Because I already know."

This appalling frankness left her speechless. Then she yielded impulsively to her admiration for his forbearance.

"You are really the best-natured young man I ever knew. If polygamy worked for the advantage of the woman, I could almost approve of it."

It was her turn to smile grimly as Cameron looked at her with wide-eyed amazement.

"You can't both get her, you know," she explained, nodding over her shoulder in the direction of Boscobel. "I

really wish you could." She seemed to be enjoying rather gleefully his digesting these iconoclastic sentiments, and he said, with some dignity:

"I have heard, in altogether an unexpected way, of Miss Walsingham's intimacy with some one whom she had better not know too well."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, suddenly very thoughtful. "And where did my niece meet this objectionable person?"

"At Mr. Kinaird's."

"Rubbish!" she declared, angrily. "Do you mean to tell me—? Is it a man or a woman?"

"A woman. And I don't mean to tell you any more."

She turned upon him so quickly that, as the high cart bounced over a rut, she almost lost her balance.

"I shall write Mr. Kinaird a letter at once," she said. "This is preposterous!"

Cameron was startled.

"No," he said, manlike and clumsy, "you mustn't do that."

"Then tell me all about it," she replied, womanlike and adroit.

Cameron was thoughtful and silent for a moment. He had meant to tell her enough to justify his action in going to New York, but he had bungled. She sat expectant now, exerting a spiritual suction that made him falter.

"I can't do that," he explained, hesitating. "You must trust me to do what is right."

"Trust you! a man in your condition!"

"My condition is, and shall remain, perfectly sober." He spoke rashly in his nervousness.

"You are flippant. I'm sure I don't know what to think." She was quiet for five minutes, puzzling it out. At last, she spoke.

"Of course, you loved her once, or thought you did, and don't want Barbara to know it. But you needn't go all the way to New York in Midsummer just for that, for, of course, she told Barbara all about it as soon as she found out you knew each other. What's the matter with the woman, anyway?"

The horses were going slowly up a

long incline between high red-clay walls, and Miss Jane could venture to turn in her seat and look Cameron squarely in the face. He hesitated for an instant, as the swift color mounted to his cheeks.

"She isn't good," he said, his eyes meeting the bright gray ones.

"Humph!" she breathed, moving her gaze slowly, "that's what the woman gets every time."

She asked him no more questions, however, and, when he left her at the station with just time to board his train, she gave him her hand very cordially.

"I will trust you," she said, "since it must be. Good-bye." Then, as the dapper footman clambered up beside her, she forgot everything in the thought of her unwonted situation before the sight of the villagers.

"Don't drive through the village, Bunting," she cried, actually nestling into him in her sudden sense of possible ridicule, "and mind how you cross the tracks, or you'll jolt me off."

She breathed more freely when they were on the main road once more, and the little town, with its undefined streets, lay hidden behind them.

In the meantime, Cameron, pounding on toward Seneca to meet the New York express, was not feeling thoroughly at ease. So far, he had acted on overmastering impulse, but now that twenty hours of inactivity lay between him and New York, belated considerations of prudence assailed him. What right had he, after all, to be assuming control of Barbara's friendships!

He looked out over the receding fields of corn and cotton lying hot in the late sun, and realized that he was very warm, dusty and uncomfortable. Then he took out of his pocket Viola Denison's letter, received the night before, and re-read parts of it.

I am much interested in your Southern friend, and find her very charming. Is it not a little to be regretted, though, that she should be so old-fashioned in her views? It is very delightful and refreshing, but is it not just a little to be deplored? Yet how can I expect you to answer these questions,

when you have known her only in her own familiar surroundings, and where, she tells me, there is no social life by which to make comparison? I am finding a great pleasure in instilling into her mind certain little bits of knowledge which I had thought were born with every girl baby, in these days, but which your friend seems to be without.

"Damn her!" he muttered, savagely, all his determination to separate Barbara from this woman rushing back upon him. He could see the glint that had been in her lustrous eyes, veiled beneath their lashes, as she wrote the words, and he hated her as a man hates the woman who holds the key to a great folly in his past.

He had followed Barbara's wish, and during the weeks of her absence applied himself to his novel with gratifying results; but, now that he had started on his way to her, he knew for the first time how much he had missed her, and understood, with sudden conviction, how closely she had become a part of his life.

In his impatience to tell her this, he paced the station as he waited for his train, and cursed the delay. Why had he let her go from him without speaking to her of his love in more positive terms than he had done? What might she not be thinking of him at that moment, if Viola Denison had chosen to imply certain things? He knew that Mrs. Denison would imply certain things, if it suited her ends, and he had an uneasy feeling, which the letter in his pocket went to strengthen, that she might do even more.

By the time he reached New York, he was in a fever of impatience, and, taking a hansom, he was driven quickly to his club. It was too late in the day to attempt to see Barbara, so, after a bath, he went out on Fifth avenue, finding some comfort in the familiar rush and bustle. He saw no one whom he recognized, for the great thoroughfare was almost completely shorn of its fashionable traffic. Now and then, the liveried legs of a coachman would catch his eye, and he would look into the vehicle, but it was never any one he knew who sat there.

The sudden notes of a coaching-horn

caused him to turn, with many others, as a great yellow tally-ho dashed up the Avenue, the gay dresses and sunshades of the women on top flashing like flowers. Cameron glanced at the laughing passengers, and his heart gave a leap. Barbara was sitting on the box, chatting with animation to the Harvard man. Then, as the coach swept on, he caught the flutter of lilac ribbons and laces, and the sound of a low laugh that seemed meant for him.

He turned round abruptly, and walked back to his club. There was no reason on earth why Barbara should not go out on Mr. Kinaird's coach. Indeed, she had written him that she had done so. Yet there was something very strange in the sight of her dashing in this way up Fifth avenue, with never a thought or a glance for him, and he realized with an absurdly unreasonable pang that there were about this Barbara, whom he had just seen, elements of difference that removed her from him. Suddenly his plan of action did not appear so simple, and the perspective of everything became blurred.

However, morning found him on his way to Mr. Kinaird's, though when he drove from the station to the house in a hired wagon it was to find that Barbara had gone up the river in the steam yacht. He determined to wait, and was shown into a cool morning-room.

He did not sit down, but, with the feeling that his wait would be a long one, moved about the room, studying the many water-colors that hung upon the sage-green walls. Something in a sketch of Winslow Homer's, the figures of several naked negro divers, caught his attention, and he paused. Just beneath it, on a teakwood table, lay a book from which a spray of heliotrope projected. Forgetting the picture, he took up the book with impulsive curiosity. It was his own, "The Blood-stone," and the sprig of heliotrope at once assumed a disagreeable significance. Almost instantly, the door opened, and he heard the quick swish

of skirts. He turned slowly. The woman uttered a surprised little cry.

"You, my friend!"

She came to him with both arms held out, her eyes more than ever the hue of rich, golden wine.

"I expected you would come, but not so soon. You received my letter?"

"Yes," Cameron said, looking at her gravely, and taking one of her outstretched hands. "What was the use in waiting?"

She smiled, narrowing her eyes, but in some inexplicable way brightening them. Still holding his hand, she drew him down beside her on a low ottoman.

"I have waited—so long," she said. "Do you know what I was doing before you came?" She reached toward his book. "Reading this. I felt your presence on every page."

This was the book Cameron was wont to say his critics had written, and he despised it accordingly.

"Nonsense," he said, sharply. "You used to be a woman of admirable discernment."

"That is a quality not apt to be lost with increasing years," she answered, a trifle quickly. "Do you find me much changed, Ronald?"

He looked at her, as she meant he should.

"You were always beautiful," he responded. "I see no change."

"But you have changed," she said, a note of sharpness creeping into the purr of her voice. "You no longer love."

He was silent, but she understood the silence perfectly.

"I mean, you no longer love me," she added, watching his profile, and speaking now with the hint of amusement in her eyes. Still he was silent, and she went on:

"She has gone up the river with the others, but she will soon return. I wished to see you, so I had a headache."

"Then you did see me yesterday?" he said, coldly. "You said nothing about it, of course."

She watched him for a moment, then shook her head.

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"May I ask why?"

She laughed softly, laying her jeweled hand on his knee.

"There is one thing in which you will never change," she said, following the crease in his trousers with her finger. "Your innocence about the ways of women makes you a perpetual joy."

He flushed under the banter in her eyes, and, as she felt the charm of his boyishness mingled with his strength, a quick pain hardened her mouth.

"Why should I not have this hour with you alone?" she asked, passionately. Then, as his hand lay passive under hers, she added, "I had another reason, too."

"Doubtless," he replied, drily. "I think I can divine it."

"Ah?" she cried, humorous incredulity rippling over her face, "try!" But Cameron was frowning now.

Hearing voices coming up the front drive, she left him, and, when he saw her single Barbara out, and bring her by a side-path to the house ahead of the others, he was sure that he understood the second motive. A minute later, while he was wondering how he could prepare Barbara for the sight of him, they entered the room, Barbara in advance.

She turned very white, and stood still. Then she went quickly up to him.

"I came on very unexpectedly," he said, in haste. "I did not have time to let you know. All are quite well at home."

The color came back to her face.

"It is mighty good to see you," she said, falling into the Southernism in her excitement. "I didn't know I had been homesick until I saw you."

Her frank acceptance of him as of her home sent the blood to his head. He forgot Mrs. Denison for the moment, as completely as Barbara had, and murmured:

"It was not home without you."

"What are you going to give me for this sweet surprise?" Mrs. Denison laughed, putting her arm about Barbara's waist; but her eyes went beyond the girl, and rested on Cameron.

The gleam in them was not altogether one of amusement.

"It startled me terribly, at first," Barbara answered, some feminine instinct alert. "I don't think I like even sweet surprises."

"I'm so sorry, dear," Mrs. Denison said, blandly. "It was very thoughtless of me."

"Of course you will stay for luncheon and spend the day?" Barbara asked, turning to Cameron.

"For the middle of Summer, I suppose nothing is too informal," he answered, smiling. "May I?"

"May you! Mr. Kinaird would never forgive me if I let you go away."

"And he is devoted to Barbara," Mrs. Denison asserted, not unmindful of the fact that Cameron's appeal was to Barbara, and ignored her presence entirely. Then she picked up "The Bloodstone," and, smiling radiantly upon them, left the room.

After he had answered all of Barbara's questions about things at home, Cameron asked her, impulsively:

"Why did you never mention to me in your letters that Mrs. Denison was here?"

"Did I not?" she said, in surprise. "I am sure I wrote of her to my mother."

"Do you like her?" he asked, regretting the question even as he put it.

"She has been very kind," Barbara replied, gravely, "but I do not understand her." She caught his eyes with her quick smile. "I confess I do not thinking up here. Things are so strange to me. I take them as they come, and try to look wise."

He laughed. "For instance?"

She ran her eyes over his gray homespun suit before answering.

"Why do you men turn your trousers up at the bottom, and turn your gloves down at the top? So many things are done exactly upside down! In order to understand your paintings one must cross a room and shut one's eyes. I'm afraid I don't appreciate effect."

"You are too honest."

"I'm afraid I am too 'slow,'" she said, the slang, foreign to her lips, making him look at her quickly, to catch her dark eyes smiling into his.

Then, as Mr. Kinaird passed the window, Barbara called to him, leaving Cameron with his host while she went to prepare for luncheon.

X

MR. KINAIRD insisted that Cameron should send to the city for his things, and remain as his guest, and the invitation was willingly accepted.

The course that the young novelist had set himself, so simple at a distance, seemed beset with impossibilities now that he was upon the scene. It had been easy enough to pack up his clothes, and take the train for New York, resolved to separate Barbara from Mrs. Denison; but how was it to be done? It was out of the question that he should speak to Barbara, and, though he was no coward, he did not dare to appeal to Mrs. Denison. There was only one way he could think of. He would ask Barbara to marry him, and take her back with him to her mother as his intended wife.

In the meantime, certain obstacles arose to this plan, also. As Miss Jane had prophesied, it was one thing to be alone with Barbara at Rivoli, and quite another thing to be only one among several young men about her at Mr. Kinaird's, each one with that aforesaid comfortable feeling of considering himself second to none in her esteem. Cameron, in some unaccountable way, found himself looked upon as the rival of the blue-eyed young man alone. In this cunning dealing of the cards, he could indeed recognize Viola Denison's skilful play, and the knowledge did not make him feel any more kindly toward her. What spurred him on to action more than anything else, however, was some subtle change in Barbara herself, something in the very kindness of her bearing toward him that made

him feel he was farther from her than of old.

It was several days before he had an opportunity for any extended talk with her. He had joined the coaching party that day, merely because she was going, but he had been separated from her and put next a waxen-faced young woman whose placid ecstasies made him more and more serious. Barbara, seated between the Harvard man and the army officer, seemed to have forgotten all about him. It was Mrs. Denison who proposed a stop at The Abbey for refreshments.

"It's awfully picnicky, I suppose, but I feel like having a glass of milk," she said, "or some such primeval thing. Beer will do."

So they had clambered down, and then, after a half-hour, clambered back. By a little manoeuvring, Cameron got the reins, and Barbara was beside him.

As he put the spirited horses to their paces over the splendid road, they were both silent for a few moments. The echo of the horn floated out over the Hudson, and a yachting party, steaming up the river, waved hats and handkerchiefs at them out of pure good-fellowship. Across the water, the Palisades rose greenish-gray in the clear sun.

"Can you believe that we are the same people?" he asked, speaking his thoughts without preface, with an instinctive feeling that they were her own also.

"No," she answered, a touch of solemnity in her voice, "I cannot feel that I am the same person. I seem to have slipped entirely out of the only life I ever knew until a few weeks ago."

"But you will step back just as easily." He looked at her, his glance questioning in spite of the finality of his words.

"I do not know. Do we ever step back in experience?"

"I should be sorry if you could not step back from this to that." He indicated with a backward motion of his head the men and women who sat

above them, laughing and talking lightly.

"But this is your world." The old reproach was in her voice.

"Do you like it?" he asked. "Is it all you thought it would be?"

"That is not a fair question. It is all so strange to me, the inner, no less than the outer, world. The power and magnitude of the city awe me. I forget to think of the things I used to long that I might see, listening to the roar of life. Something about it hurts me, and yet it has a wonderful calm of its own, a peace that pulses."

As he reined the horses in to make them take the steep hill more leisurely, Cameron looked at her with a feeling of amazement. She was watching the cemetery above them, its occasional glimmer of marble monuments in the shadow of the trees seeming a solecism in the joyousness of the day. Then, as they swept once more into glorious view of the river, she turned to him with a sweet seriousness in her eyes.

"I am a child of the solitude, after all. The spirit of waste places is in my blood. All the beauty of the Hudson does not mean to me what my little red creek does at home."

"And do you know," he asked, very quietly, "that your little red creek flows through magic lands for me, too, since it was there I first knew you?"

She flushed slightly, and then said, with a badinage that stung him:

"What a pretty instance of the pathetic fallacy!"

"You wouldn't have said that a month ago," he answered, with a hurt ring in his voice.

"I did not mean it," she whispered, a sudden fear in her eyes; "forgive me." And then, for a little while, both were very quiet.

Mrs. Denison, from where she sat, was watching them closely.

"I have not destroyed her charm for him by making her look like the rest of us," she thought; and, from that minute, she began to hate Barbara.

Cameron turned the leaders toward the great viaduct, and above the roofs of high buildings, dashed on to River-

side Drive, past Grant's Tomb, and into the shaded road beyond, the notes of the horn bringing passers-by to a standstill; then, through a side-street, they drove into the grateful quiet of the Park. Barbara roused into animation as a number of equestrians went rapidly by on the bridle-path.

"Watch them *drive!*" she exclaimed, indignantly. "Do you know, I am possessed of a wicked desire to pull them off their horses?"

"Do not indulge the iconoclastic impulse," Cameron laughed. "It would never be safe to take you to the opera if it once mastered you."

She turned bewildered eyes upon him.

"Do they sit like that there?" she asked.

He nodded.

"We have so many fish just out of their natural element. Their fins have not yet had time to become wings, let alone legs."

"Oh," she said, looking at a woman who trotted laboriously past, crimson between her tight habit and black derby, and followed by a very superior groom in livery, "I see!"

When they drove across the Plaza, heralded by the blare of their horn, and into the crowded Avenue, they became silent. Barbara was conscious, in her feeling of aloofness from the surging crowd and the great wealth represented by the mansions, of a spiritual contact with Cameron which gave her food for thought. This man, belonging to the life about her, of which she formed no part, loved her. She would have been no woman had she not long known that, and had she not read now in his very silences the words he had to say. In the strangeness of the fact that she was riding with him so through one of the world's great streets came a stranger thought still—that the clamor around did not penetrate into the restful happiness of her heart. She looked upon it all from afar, with him beside her.

Cameron had ordered luncheon at Delmonico's, and after it a further

trip was vetoed. Instead, the suggestion to visit Wall street, to go to the top of a sky-scraper, and to drive home in the coolness of the afternoon was received with acclamation.

"We New Yorkers really know very little of our own city," Mrs. Denison said, as they crossed over to Broadway to take an open car. "I think my tailor was right when he said to me that it was the compensation of the poor to be able to get where horses and a carriage could not go. I have always wanted to ride on the elevated road, but could never find an excuse."

Cameron, walking beside her, noted with what scrupulous care she held her skirts from contact with the sidewalk, and made no reply.

"How ghastly the opera-house looks in Summer-time!" she remarked, as their car sped by. "Do you know that people actually stand up through entire operas—women, too?"

"I have seen them," Cameron answered. "Indeed, I have done so myself."

"You!" she exclaimed. "What was the inducement? I have just read a story in which a poor Southern girl let everybody tread upon her as she sat on the step of one of the exits while she watched her lover in the boxes. She must have been very uncomfortable, but I suppose it was a sort of penance for looking so high." She smiled frankly into his rather stern eyes as they turned to hers.

"In the story," he asked, coldly, "did he take her up to the boxes?"

"Oh, there was a woman in the way," she purred, stroking her sunshade.

"What an ass the fellow must have been!" he responded, rudely.

The management of their little party seemed to have devolved by common consent upon Cameron, and he accepted it for reasons of his own. He proposed that they take a sky-scraper near Twenty-third street for their bird's-eye view of the city.

"All of its upper story is not yet occupied," he said, when they found

themselves upon the sidewalk, "and, besides, it is more central."

From the dizzy height of its top-most floor he pointed out objects of interest in the city, its streets like gray threads leading here and there to some diminutive speck of green where a park broke the close impact of buildings. Around it all, the lighter gray of distant water marked the city's natural boundary. The incessant roar of the mighty traffic came up to them in a subdued monotone.

"I wonder what the effect would be upon the artistic temperament to live up here?" the young man who wrote verses asked of Barbara. "One would be 'far from the madding crowd,' and yet right in it."

"Would it tend to epics or epigrams?" she asked, carelessly, moving from him to an opposite window from which she could see the bridges of the East River. There was an upturned box before the window, and she stood upon it, and, with a sudden impulse, stepped out on the wide cornice of stone that ran around the building. For a moment, her own daring thrilled her, and she moved forward. Then, as a gust of wind caught her, the thought of danger came over her for the first time. She went on, however, toward the next window, but it was closed, and she passed it, hoping that the next would be open. She did not dare turn back. The sudden clang of a car-bell far below made her look to the street, and she realized that a crowd had gathered, and was watching her. When she raised her eyes she saw Cameron standing on the ledge a few feet before her, his gaze seeking hers with an impelling force.

"Keep your eyes on mine," he called, as he took a step toward her. Then his hands reached her, and they were helped through the window. It had all taken but a few minutes.

"Barbara!" he cried, tightening his arms about her, oblivious of any one's presence; but Mrs. Denison, white to the lips, broke in suddenly.

"Are we being treated to a tragedy or a comedy?" she laughed, sharply.

"What a remarkable proceeding, all round!"

"I am very sorry," Barbara said, flushing slowly. "I never meant to frighten you all so, and it did not look so dreadful a thing to do." She shuddered at the remembrance.

"I shall not be able to sleep for a week," whimpered the waxen-faced girl. "How could you ever do such an *outré* thing?"

"I began to think it would be epitaphs," the poet said, and, one by one, they laughed the seriousness away.

"But we have had enough excitement for the day," Mrs. Denison said, still shaken; and, noting how the men seemed suddenly to recognize Cameron's claim to Barbara, she turned to him, her anger thinly veiled. "Do you think we might ask you to drive us home?"

Cameron, now that the shock was over, felt radiantly happy. He welcomed the fact that he had done what was equivalent to announcing publicly his engagement to Barbara, and that she had not denied it.

"Shall we go now?" he asked her, tenderly.

"I am very penitent," she said. "I fear I did very wrong."

That night, Mrs. Denison knocked gently at Barbara's door.

"Was I harsh to-day, dear?" she asked, placing herself among the cushions on a divan. "You don't know how horribly you startled me! You won't mind if I smoke a cigarette?"

Barbara, watching her spread out the folds of the rich kimono, was conscious of an unusual expression in the tawny eyes. By some instantaneous, sub-conscious process, she thought of the eyes of a lioness she had lately seen in the Bronx.

"What remarkable eyes you have!" she said, impulsively, not answering the question, which, indeed, Mrs. Denison had practically answered herself. The girl took a low chair opposite her guest.

"Thank you," Mrs. Denison said, after a brief pause, while she looked at

Barbara through a thin haze of smoke. "Your own are not your least notable feature." She laughed with a genuine sense of humor. "But I did not come here that we might tell each other what charms we possess."

"Why, then? You are not going to scold me?"

The older woman looked searchingly through the smoke of her cigarette. More than once, in the last few days, she had detected a new touch of self-reliance in Barbara's manner that put her on guard. She had always been self-possessed; once or twice recently Mrs. Denison had seen her masterful. She remembered now her old thought about the volcano of Barbara's nature.

"I hardly know," she answered, meditatively. "I think I felt a little uneasy about you."

Barbara's brows lowered in a slight frown. Then she smiled.

"I've been tripping in some stupid red tape?"

"Never mind," Mrs. Denison said, putting down her cigarette, and clasping her hands behind her yellow hair as though dismissing from her mind a subject not worth worry. "Do you know why Ronald Cameron came on here so suddenly?"

"I never thought to ask him," Barbara answered, her face flushing, but her gaze meeting the narrowed one bent on her.

"Then you do know?"

Something flashed into the darkness of Barbara's eyes.

"You said you were uneasy about me. Will you tell me why?"

"If you will pardon a very frank question."

Barbara nodded. A sudden conviction came to her that Mrs. Denison was trying to be very disagreeable.

"Is Ronald Cameron going to marry you?"

In her surprise, Barbara entirely overlooked the covert insolence of the question. She regarded Mrs. Denison with slowly gathering indignation.

"You think that a very frank question, do 't you?" that lady asked, con-

tempt for what she considered Barbara's dullness making her lip curl.

"I think it an extremely ill-bred one."

"Oh," Mrs. Denison exclaimed, throwing aside her assumed nonchalance, "I have made you angry." She sat erect among the cushions, and looked at Barbara closely. "And yet," she added, dropping her eyes, "I came to warn you against him."

"Why?"

"Because I am your friend, and he is a desperate flirt."

Barbara shook her head. She dared not trust her voice just then.

"I have known him much longer than you," Mrs. Denison continued, curiously misunderstanding the silence. "Once he made me feel that I was very dear to him. I cannot sit quietly by and see him make you unhappy."

A strange smile contracted Barbara's lips, but still she said nothing, and Mrs. Denison, gaining assurance, sank back among her cushions, and went on:

"You take life so seriously, dear. These men of the world are like the costly confections that fashion puts on our tables—only a little of them is meant for eating; the rest is for the eye. It was not kind of him to take advantage of your inexperience, and play fast and loose with you. You see, I do not forget the sweet simplicity of your home."

Barbara's eyes glowed.

"But you do forget that I am a woman, and that——"

She rose hastily, and, crossing to a window, threw its shutters open to the night, and stood there with her back full toward Mrs. Denison.

"Is that your answer?" the latter said, stung by the scarcely veiled contempt. "Let me tell you this about him, then. The man who made love to me before and after my marriage, and then turned to other playthings, is not going to be held by you."

Barbara, pale in the shadow beyond the light, faced her incredulously. She had forgotten Cameron. But Mrs. Denison was blind and deaf to everything but her own rage.

"You do not believe me?" she cried.

"I can give you proof."

"Don't!" Barbara said, haughtily. "Spare yourself that." The cheapness of the woman's malice, the humiliation of it all, made her physically ill, and she turned again to the window. Mrs. Denison was beside her in a moment.

"Do you think," she cried, "that I am going to let a girl like you take this tone with me—after what you did this morning, publicly, before us all? You're a fool, with your virtuous airs."

Barbara, with her eyes blazing, confronted her quickly.

"May I ask you to leave my room?" she said, drawing away from the crimson kimono. "You have taught me quite enough for one night."

"You're a fool," Mrs. Denison repeated, her lips parting cruelly. Then, with a shrug of her shoulders, she went from the room, closing the door softly behind her.

Left alone, Barbara threw herself into a chair, shaking with a chill that was not of the flesh.

"It isn't true," she moaned, wrestling with the first sickening doubt of her life. "It can't be true!"

XI

WHEN Mr. Kinaird's guests assembled the next morning at the little pier, to embark for the proposed trip to West Point, Cameron missed Barbara, and Mrs. Denison, charmingly gowned in a white yachting costume, watched the irresolution gather in his face.

"Barbara has a headache this morning," she said, in answer to his glances in the direction of the house. "Doubtless she feels the effect of that shock she gave us yesterday."

"It is not like her to have headaches," he replied. "I'll go and persuade her to come."

"Do you think that is wise? The glare on the water—" suggested Mrs. Denison; but Cameron, with an impatient exclamation, threw down the binoculars he was carrying, and walked

rapidly up the path. He found Barbara in the morning-room, and was struck by her unusual pallor.

"So you really have a headache?" he said, regretfully. "I shall stay with you, then."

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed, the color coming to her cheeks. "You mustn't do that."

"Mustn't I?" he laughed, pressing an electric button.

"They are sounding the siren for you now," Barbara protested. "Please do not stay on my account."

"I won't—altogether. Tell them at the landing, James, that I shall stay with Miss Walsingham." Then, as the footman withdrew, Cameron caught the troubled expression in her eyes.

"What is it?" he asked, sitting down near her. "Do you suppose I would go up that river, and leave you here alone?"

"I wished to be alone," she said, coloring at his words.

"But that was before you knew that I would stay, too, wasn't it?"

As their eyes met, she smiled rather gravely.

"I believe I am glad to have you stay. There is something I want to say to you."

He crossed to the window, and, looking out between the trees, saw the yacht already heading up the river.

"They are off," he said, coming back to her, "unless some others have mutinied also." He drew his chair close before her, and gently took the book she had been reading. "I, too, have something to speak to you about."

With the remembrance of Mrs. Denison's words sweeping through her mind, she was silent.

"Barbara, you do not need to have me tell you that I love you."

Her head drooped. "Why do you say this to me?" she asked.

"Why?" He took her hand in his. "Because it is the sum of all I have to say—that, and to ask you to be my wife."

A glad light leaped into her face, but, as he leaned to her, she shrank from him suddenly.

"Wait," she cried; "I had forgotten. I cannot promise to be that."

"Barbara!"

"Don't ask me to explain just now," she said, slowly, "but I can't."

"Do you mean that you do not love me?"

She looked at him, the unhappiness in her eyes deepening as a silence that she could not break fell upon her.

"Answer me!" he exclaimed.

"I do not know," she cried. "Don't think me heartless; but all has become so confused. I cannot see things to-day. Oh, why didn't you go with the others, and leave me here? I wanted to think."

"Of me?" he asked, his voice a command in its intensity.

"Yes!"

"You did know, then, what I had to say to you?"

"Yes!"

"And you were not sure of your answer?"

"No."

Then, suddenly, something like anger rose within her at his questioning.

"Why do you catechise me so?" she asked, trembling.

"Because there is a great change in you since yesterday."

She stopped him with a gesture of appeal.

"Don't! you mustn't remember that. I was unstrung, and did not realize what it might mean. Oh, how can you speak of that?"

He looked at her in amazement, not understanding her agitation. As she covered her face with her hands, a quick intuition came to him. He comprehended now her desire to be alone.

"Barbara, some one has been reproving you."

She dropped her hands abruptly, and looked at him.

"Mrs. Denison has been talking to you."

She nodded, still with her eyes on his face.

"What did she say to you?" he asked, sternly. "You are not going to let the poison of that woman's tongue

affect your mind?" He got up, and, thrusting his hands in his trousers pockets, moved up and down the room.

"Barbara, you must tell me what she said."

"She insulted me. I must end my visit here."

Cameron groaned.

"Tell me what she said about me," he entreated. "I have a right to demand that. She cannot insult you."

Barbara blanched at the implied acknowledgment his words held of what she had been told about him. It was true, then, and she had been struggling with her doubts in vain! She shook her head slowly.

"I am going home," she said, miserably.

"I came to take you there," he answered.

She flushed crimson with a sudden thought, and tears sprang into her eyes.

"It is your home, and not mine. I had forgotten that, too."

"Listen to me," he said, bending over her chair. "I love you as I never loved before; everything I have is yours—is nothing to me without you to share it."

"But you have loved before," she said, a wretched catch in her voice, "and when you shouldn't."

"She told you that?"

"It may be very old-fashioned," she cried, with quivering lip, "but I could never feel the same to you as—as I did before I knew that."

"You do not love me!" he exclaimed, bitterly.

"But I do; otherwise I should not be so miserable."

He caught her in his arms.

"Barbara, I have never loved till now. You are my first love. Everything else has been mere boyish folly, merely the prelude to perfect song! Tell me that you will be my wife."

For a moment, she lay still in his embrace; then she freed herself.

"It cannot be," she said, her voice

so low that he scarcely heard. "Do not ask me, Ronald. I cannot marry you."

"But, Barbara, if you love me!"

"For me there must be more in marriage than love," she said, slowly.

"There must be respect."

He started as though struck.

"You mean—?" he cried.

"Do not ask me!" she implored. "I know it will seem absurd; I know that men do not ask so much from the women they make their wives; but how can I help it? Something has gone from me that was mine before."

"It will come back if you love me," he said, sadly, "for love makes it easy to forgive."

"It is almost as though I knew you did not love me," she murmured, her voice breaking. "It makes you some one else whom I do not love."

"But, Barbara," he pleaded, "you surely know the follies, the madness of youth. A man has not the safeguards that a woman has, and, if he goes a little wrong, it almost makes him better."

"I do not blame you," she whispered, wretched under the longing in his eyes, "but I cannot talk about it."

The conviction of finality fell upon his heart with a sudden chill, and in that moment he realized, what Barbara herself did not know, that he had never touched the innermost depths of her nature, that she had never passionately loved him. Against this demand of hers for an absolute purity of past upon his part, his love fell bleeding. She had not blamed him, but he felt that her condemnation was fundamental. When he spoke again it was almost as though to one removed from all touch of sympathy with passion.

"I want you to promise me to forget that I have spoken so, and to let us be good friends still."

"Always that," she cried, with a wan smile which fled before a fear that rushed over her. "You do not think that my heart, too, is not breaking?"

He took her suddenly in his arms,

soothing her as he might have done one whom he pitied merely, and glad that she did not see his face. When he released her, he turned away quickly, and left the room.

It was some hours later that Mr. Kinaird, searching for Barbara, found her in a little Summer-house overlooking the river. She made him sit beside her on the rustic bench.

"How did you know that I wished to see you?" she asked, hoping that he would not notice the traces of her tears, or her weariness.

"Possibly by thought transference," he answered, "for I have been seeking you high and low."

"I was thinking," she said, hesitating over her words, "that I must be going home very soon now. I want you to be awfully sorry."

"I shall and I sha'n't," he replied, laughing at her surprise. "What do you say to having me go with you?"

Genuine pleasure shone in her eyes.

"Will you, really? It would be delightful. My mother and Aunt Jane, too, will be so glad."

She watched a sailboat tack slowly across the still water, a troubled look coming to her face.

"You know it is not our home any longer," she reminded him. "It will be like being in at the finish, for we must leave very soon now."

He scanned her face intently as her gaze remained on the sailboat.

"Mr. Cameron has just left, rather hurriedly. He asked me to give his adieux to you."

"Gone south?" she asked, abruptly, while the color died from her face. Then she turned her head to hide the tears that sprang to her eyes.

"Yes," Mr. Kinaird said, gently. "He told me, my child, something of your wish to go back also, and it occurred to me that I would go with you."

She gave him her hand, not trusting herself to speak, and he went on:

"I can't tell you how much I am looking forward to our journey down."

"But after all this," she said, with a

comprehensive gesture, "how can we make you happy there?"

"Barbara, child," he answered, still holding her hand, "the dearest memories of my life centre in that old home of yours. Any man with means can build up a place like this."

"When do we go?" she asked.

"That is for you to say."

"And your guests? What will they think?"

"There isn't one of them that won't enjoy my absence," he laughed. "Yes, my dear, I know it. Have you never been of a house-party when the host and hostess were called away? It is a delightful sensation that comes to the guests."

Cameron, in the meantime, having reached the city, was making perfunctory visits to his publishers, his tailors and his lawyers. He was trying to devise some scheme by which, if he cleared out for Mexico, or Japan, he might induce Barbara's mother and aunt to agree to remain at Rivoli until his indefinite return, by which time Barbara might have married. He smiled bitterly at this latter thought. In the first sting of his disappointment, his good nature deserted him at the remembrance of Barbara's exacting standard. And yet, he reflected, moodily, it is what a man demands of his wife! Keen, physical disgust of the whole subject possessed him, and he thought of Viola Denison with a loathing that made the intellectual atmosphere of his publishers' office refresh him. The editor greeted him with the effusiveness due to the large sales of his previous books.

"And the new story of Southern life?" he asked, smiling and rubbing his hands.

"I have come to cry off," Cameron replied.

"Impossible!" the editor exclaimed. "The advance notices are cut. We are counting on making a hit."

"I am not in the mood," Cameron said. "It can't be done." It gave him a savage pleasure to be inexorable, and hearing of those advance notices quite determined him.

When he hurried out again on Fifth avenue, he ran into an old friend.

"But I thought you buried in the far South, full of malaria, mosquitos, your horses, and your book. How is the book?"

"Dead."

"And the plantation?"

"A boomerang."

"And yourself?"

"Off for Japan, or Alaska, or any old place."

Rodney looked at him critically.

"Worse than malaria, eh?"

"Infinitely," Cameron answered.

"I guess you want a gin rickey."

"Or a dozen of them," Cameron said, emphatically. "If it were not so infernally hot, I'd like to go on a tear."

"Lucky thing you met me," Rodney laughed, hailing a hansom, and pushing Cameron into it. "I've just come off one, and so am admirably fitted to give you good advice, and see that you keep sober."

Over their drinks in a cool corner of their club, Cameron asked, suddenly:

"I say, Geoffrey, if you were a woman, what would you be least inclined to forgive in the man who loved you?"

"The fact that he had never loved before."

"What! But, pshaw, you are a man!"

"Hence the sanity of my answer. Love, old man, is either the finest comedy or the highest tragedy. Of course, it takes much rehearsing. Fill up your glass."

Cameron somewhat doggedly clung to the subject.

"So you think the woman's point of view is never sane?"

"My dear Ronald," Rodney said, eying him gravely, "it is very hot for philosophy. There are so many shades of women."

"I mean the woman without any shading," Cameron replied, sternly. "There are such."

"Oh, under those circumstances, I think I'd least forgive his acknowledging that he'd ever loved before the woman with shading."

XII

MISS JANE, in garden-hat and gloves, sat upon the front steps at Rivoli with two telegrams open in her lap.

"Emeline," she called, "can't you let Betty get out the dinner alone, and come here to me? What is the use of having servants if you persist in doing all their work?"

"They will take more than is necessary, Jane," Mrs. Walsingham said, as she put her key-basket down on the green bench, and stood behind Miss Jane.

"Let them, then. If they don't take it from the store-room, they will take it from the kitchen, so it's all the same. What do you think of this?"

She picked up one of the telegrams, and read it aloud.

"Have Bunting meet me Seneca one-forty Wednesday. CAMERON."

"That's to-morrow," Mrs. Walsingham said.

Miss Jane put the telegram down on the step, and placed her garden-shears upon it. Then she took up the other piece of yellow paper.

"Listen to this!" she exclaimed.

"Have carriage and wagon at Seneca one-forty Wednesday to meet Mr. Kinaird and me. All well. BARBARA."

Mrs. Walsingham held out her hand for the telegram, but Miss Jane put it under the shears.

"That's what it says," she declared, "but I don't understand the thing at all."

"They have quarreled," Mrs. Walsingham suggested.

"Nonsense! More likely they are engaged, and Jerrold Kinaird is coming down to back that young man up. I might have known I couldn't trust him—either of them, I mean." She pushed the Irish setter from her with her foot, and drew off her gloves. "Can't you suggest something?" she asked, sharply.

"I was wondering if you could be right," Mrs. Walsingham remarked, tentatively.

"Of course I'm right," Miss Jane

snapped. "What else can it be? He telegraphs from New York, and she from the country. That's why both sent messages. I suppose he went to the city to buy a ring. I hope they'll have the decency not to be married there."

"Jane!" Mrs. Walsingham sat down abruptly. "You don't think there's any danger of that?"

"Girls do anything in these days. Don't begin to cry now, Emeline. I suppose Jerrold Kinaird has some sense of old-time propriety left. That's why he is coming along—a kind of chaperon after all the mischief is done."

"Why did you let her go?" wailed Mrs. Walsingham.

Miss Jane overturned the setter entirely this time.

"I let her go!" she exclaimed. "I made her go to keep Ralph Darcy and Cameron from shooting her between them, or each other, or something of the kind. You never saw anything; you never do. That is left to me. I believe you think that because it's nineteen hundred instead of seventeen hundred, men don't want to kill one another over a woman still. As if they'd ever change!"

"You speak so plainly. It's all very mixed up."

"Stop crying," Miss Jane said, impatiently. "I don't suppose you're to blame. After all, Barbara's done well enough; only, what Ralph Darcy is going to do for a wife now, I'm sure I don't know."

Mrs. Walsingham, drying her tears, said, with spirit:

"Did you wish Barbara to marry him because there was no one else for him?"

"I had set my heart on his marrying her." Miss Jane's voice quivered, suspiciously. "I'm thankful I never had any children," she added, after a moment.

"They are a great responsibility."

Miss Jane smiled sardonically, but was silent. It occurred to her that the assumed responsibility for other people's children sometimes became very great. She had bungled horribly.

Ten minutes later, she went down the back road to the stables to seek Bunting. She admired Bunting's crisp English ways, and had horrified Mrs. Walsingham one day by declaring her belief that he was the son of a lord.

"The fellow's a gentleman—all but his clothes, and they are picturesque," she affirmed, "even if somewhat scant."

She found him at the lower stables, working with the horses. He touched his cap to her gallantly.

"Your master is coming home to-morrow, Bunting, and you are to meet him at Seneca. I want you to drive me over to Mr. Ralph's."

"Now, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"The sun's very hot, ma'am, if I might presume."

"So is my impatience, Bunting. I'm waiting."

She looked out over the fields while he gave orders for the hitching up of a horse, and disappeared in the harness-room to don his livery. The beauty of the place in its greens and purples, seared with its roads of red clay, smote upon her heart. She turned her gaze to the mountains, a mist in her eyes making them swim in the blue haze.

Bunting broke in upon her thoughts, deferentially.

"All is ready, ma'am." Then he helped her to the seat of the cart, and swung himself up beside her.

By good fortune, Darcy was about his house, and led Miss Jane into the darkened hall.

"Everything's gone wrong, Ralph," she exclaimed, taking the chair he placed for her near a bowl of roses. "They are coming back to-morrow, engaged, if not married."

As she took off her wide-brimmed hat, she did not see his face blanch, but something in his silence made her realize that she was, perhaps, assuming too much.

"That's the way I take it, anyhow," she added.

"You have heard from her?"

"And him—two telegrams. They

will be here to-morrow on the midday train. Mr. Kinaird comes with them."

"I expected it," Darcy said, slowly. "Cameron is a fine fellow." He spoke with palpable effort.

"He can't hold a candle to you."

"You were always prejudiced in my favor."

"I never was prejudiced. Your fatal fault is that it always takes so much to rouse you, and then you always rouse too much. Now, I expected this news to make you very angry, and, instead, you say nice things about the man who has cut you out. I always will think it was your own fault."

"It there is one thing a man can't do," he said, with some vehemence, "it is to make love against his nature."

"Against your nature!" she exclaimed. "What do you mean? Didn't you want her?"

"So much that, when she said she didn't want me—" He passed his hand swiftly across his eyes, and rose from his chair. "I don't want to talk about that." Then he added, with a laugh: "Some diseases, you know, are driven inward."

"If that's so, they always break out again."

Darcy sat down, leaning toward Miss Jane with his elbows on his knees.

"You mustn't be vexed with me," he said, pleadingly. "I deserve the whole thing better than you know, but I want your sympathy."

She was much too disappointed to be easily forgiving.

"What good is that?" she asked, with petulance. "I want sympathy myself. Long before you had any thought of marrying Barbara, I had made up my mind that you should. I believe marriages are the most contrary things that human beings have to think about. They are more ticklish than baking."

Her glance fell on the ivory-handled riding-whip, and she added, with gentler meditateness:

"Even when they don't come off, they have a way of getting into the next generation. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if, when you are sixty, you

are worrying worse than ever over the marriage of Barbara's son to your daughter. The thing goes like a human chain-stitch."

Darcy leaned back in his chair, forgetting Miss Jane's presence in a swift realization of his despair. She looked at him attentively, a grim sympathy stealing into her eyes.

"You are not going to take it that way, Ralph?" she asked, with a sharp inflection that betrayed her alarm.

Darcy pulled himself together, and sat erect.

"Don't worry about me," he said, smiling. "There is no reason at all why I should be disappointed."

Miss Jane reached for her hat, and began putting it on with slow deliberation. She felt dissatisfied with the result of her visit, and yet she had nothing more to say. As he followed her out to the veranda, and signaled for Bunting, Darcy said:

"You will be glad to see Mr. Kinaird again. I remember the presents he used to give me as a little boy."

Miss Jane stopped, suddenly.

"I had entirely forgotten him," she exclaimed, her eyes brightening. "I'm not so sure, however, that I shall be glad to see him, though I don't say exactly that he is to blame."

When she had driven away, Darcy went to his own room and threw himself full length across the bed. The anguish with which he had listened to Miss Jane had spent itself. A dull indifference, apathetic acceptance, was creeping over him. It never occurred to him to doubt Miss Jane's supposition as to the cause of Cameron's and Barbara's sudden return, and Mr. Kinaird's accompanying them lent strength to the supposition. Barbara's rejection of him had wounded his pride more than it had wounded his hope, and his love had taken heart of her grace on several occasions since that night. Then his own criminal folly in that fencing match with Cameron had tied his hands, but Barbara's gentleness to him just before she had gone north had filled him with strong hope. When he recalled this

now, a passion of hatred for Cameron, who had followed her and won her, rushed over him. Jealousy tore him.

He sprang to the floor, and paced the room rapidly, his eyes ominously bright. Had Miss Jane seen him now, she would have known that he had roused too much.

That lady had, in the meanwhile, arrived at home, and joined Mrs. Walsingham in the blue room, which was being prepared for Mr. Kinaird.

"Do you think he will be comfortable here without his own bath-room?" Mrs. Walsingham asked, unhappily. "Barbara writes of the great elegance of his own house."

"If he isn't, he will have to go back," Miss Jane answered. "We can hardly run out an extension in one day's time. Besides, he has been comfortable here before." She was not feeling very hospitable just after the heat of her drive.

XIII

MISS JANE and Mrs. Walsingham, the former in her gray poplin and white lace cap, the latter in black silk and cap of black lace and purple ribbons, were sitting on the veranda awaiting the travelers.

"I think it would be as well, Jane," Mrs. Walsingham ventured, timidly, "if we bore in mind that we do not know positively yet of their engagement."

Miss Jane waved her heron-feather fan. There was a pink rose caught in her large cameo brooch, and a delicate pink flush in her cheeks made her charming.

"I shall encourage the young man in no way," she said, gravely.

"No," Mrs. Walsingham assented; "we will wait until he speaks, of course."

Miss Jane's eyes opened wide.

"Do you think I have lost my senses, Emeline?"

"No, no, Jane! I did not mean that; but it would be so awkward if we made a mistake."

"I quite agree with you, but I won't make any." The slight stress laid on the personal pronoun was very characteristic.

They watched the shadows lengthen among the trees, until the sound of a horse's hoofs on the road stiffened both ladies into attention, and a moment later the heavy latch of the front gate clicked.

"He has come on ahead of the others," Mrs. Walsingham whispered, though Cameron was yet a quarter of a mile away.

Miss Jane greeted him rather formally as he joined them.

"You are fond of going and coming at short notice," she said.

"My message surprised you, then?" he asked. "I wanted to get down here a day or so before the others, but we met at Jersey City, and came on together."

Miss Jane showed her surprise by a lifting of the heron-feather fan.

"You mean," Mrs. Walsingham asked, "that you did not know Barbara and Mr. Kinaird were coming on the same train?"

"Not until after I had telegraphed," he said.

Mrs. Walsingham coughed nervously, and Miss Jane frowned. The one reverted at once to her original conception of a quarrel; the other saw in this attempt of Cameron's to reach them first a desire to gain their consent to his engagement to Barbara before she should arrive.

"You must have found the city very warm," Mrs. Walsingham suggested, as a change of the conversation.

"And noisy. This is like calm after storm," he answered. "I can almost hear the stillness."

Miss Jane, watching him narrowly, detected an unrest in his manner quite foreign to it. "He knows he has betrayed me," she thought to herself. Then she forgot all about him as Barbara and Mr. Kinaird were driven up, and she followed Mrs. Walsingham to the head of the front steps.

"My dear madam," the old gentleman said, bowing over Mrs. Walsing-

ham's slim hand, "how delighted I am to see you once more!" Then, turning to Miss Jane, he took her hand in both of his.

"It is wonderful!" he exclaimed, his eyes on the delicate flush of her cheeks. "You have taught Time to stand still."

She led him to the corner of the piazza where the chairs were.

"You will find many things just the same," she said, a soft flutter in her voice, "and yet there are many changes, too. Do you remember the Norway spruce? See how it has grown."

"And your mother's mimosa," he returned. "I always think of her among her flowers."

The others joined them, and they chatted on. Miss Jane thought Barbara unusually animated, but she looked in vain for any sign of an engagement-ring. She noticed, too, that there was nothing sentimental in her bearing toward Cameron, or in his toward her, and she thought the more of both. She detested the *patois* of love-making. Then she thought of Darcy, and sighed. Presently, she turned to Cameron, who, in a suit of white flannels, came and sat near her.

"What became of the woman?" she asked, nodding her gray curls in the direction of New York.

"She made her innings, all right," he said, smiling, but the bitterness in his voice did not escape Miss Jane.

"What do you mean by that? I'm too old for slang."

"That isn't slang. It is technical. She put me out on the fly."

He had not meant her to understand him, but under her look of incredulity he saw that she had guessed somewhat of the truth. Suddenly, a light broke upon her.

"You brought Barbara away from her—is that it?" She interposed her fan skilfully between them and Mr. Kinaird, who was talking to Mrs. Walsingham.

"She came away from her," he corrected.

Miss Jane held his blue eyes for a

moment, and, when he turned them away, she studied his face.

"You haven't been well," she said, abruptly.

"Horribly so!"

"Then you haven't been happy."

He hesitated for just a moment.

"Foolishly so!" he answered; and his eyes met hers again.

She laid her fan in her lap, and leaned back in the chair, all her animosity toward him driven away by a rush of sympathy. She understood the telegrams now.

In the morning, while they were eating their figs and scuppernongs, Ben brought over from Darcy a large basket of Lamarck roses for Barbara, with the message that he had been called to the county seat on a matter of business.

"Tell Mr. Ralph that I wish to see him as soon as he returns," Miss Jane said, as Ben stood in the doorway.

When Darcy received this message, the sun was already hanging over the mountains. He was hot and tired from a long drive, and the misery in his heart made him impatient of annoyances.

"Did she say why she wanted me?" he asked, inclined to refuse compliance, contrary to all his usual instincts; but before the negro could answer, he gave the order:

"Saddle Mazeppa, and bring him up to the house."

He changed his clothes hurriedly, thinking that, if he could see Miss Jane and get her message before supper time at Rivoli, he might manage to decline the invitation to remain. He felt that he could not endure that—to witness Cameron's happiness in possession of Barbara's love—to talk and laugh while Barbara was radiant before him in her love for Cameron.

He rode at a brisk gallop down the avenue, and then took the short cut through the woods. It seemed to him that, with every step of Mazeppa in the direction of Rivoli, his unwillingness to go there increased. Once he pulled the horse to a sudden standstill, as it occurred to him that perhaps Miss

Jane was sending for him merely because she suspected his loneliness, and wished to give him a pleasant evening. He laughed shortly. A moment more, and he would have swung the horse around, had not Mazeppa, turning his head and sniffing at his master's foot, himself started on again toward Rivoli.

Out on the main road, he tightened rein and went on toward the Ghost-bottom in a canter. All at once, the horse quivered, and swerved to one side. As he did so, Darcy caught the sound of horses' feet in a mad run behind him.

He pulled Mazeppa to a halt, and, twisting his thigh in the saddle, looked up the road. In a glance, he recognized Cameron's grays, the high drag, and Cameron himself at the mercy of the four terrified horses.

Darcy wheeled his excited animal back from the road. His heart beat like a hammer against his breast. In an overwhelming impulse of evil, he wished Cameron thrown from the rocking vehicle, and killed before him. In that moment of breathless hate, he struck Mazeppa across the head to still his snorting. The next second, and Cameron's set face flashed by him in a whirl of dust.

"Mazeppa!"

Darcy's voice rang out sweet and clear, and he leaned forward on his favorite's neck. If he could reach the grays before they made the turn in at the gate! If he could not—

He murmured words of encouragement to his flying steed, speeding him on with his will. He gained upon the runaways by a daring guidance of Mazeppa over a rough piece of ground, while the grays kept in the curving road. He lost again as the maddened horses tore down an incline.

The white fence of the Rivoli lawn was in sight. A quarter of a mile more, and the road turned in to the gate. If it chanced to be open, and the grays dashed in! If Cameron could not hold them to the main road!

Mazeppa's nose was now on a level with the rear wheels, and Darcy

leaned forward in his stirrups. The horse sprang ahead, abreast of the cart, past the forewheels, abreast of the grays.

"Keep them in the road," he shouted, seeing with dreadful fear that the gate was open. Then he leaned forward farther still, reaching toward the heads of the leaders.

His hand touched the rein, but his grasp missed it. Then he leaned over further, until only his left hand and his left knee kept him on his horse, and seized the rein near the bit, but, as he did so, the gray sprang aside, and Darcy, already beyond his balance, lurched from his horse, clinging to the bit of the off gray. With his other hand he gripped the animal's nose, and threw his whole weight upon it. When the horses were brought to a stop, and Cameron leaped down, Darcy tottered against the post. They had stopped just within the open gateway.

Cameron threw the reins to Bunting, and ran to Darcy.

"You are hurt!" he cried, frightened by the deathly pallor of his face. "My God, what is it?"

Darcy tried to take a step, reeled, and fell into Cameron's arms, the blood gushing from his nose and mouth.

All through that night Barbara sat on the settee in the hall up-stairs, outside of the room into which they had carried Darcy. Now and then, the door would open, and Cameron, looking worn and wretched, would come to her for something, and she would go down the wide stairs into the silence of the deserted rooms. Once Miss Jane had come out, and gone to her own room on noiseless feet, to put on a dressing-gown, that she might watch all night. Mrs. Walsingham had never left the bedside, for in time of illness this gentle little woman became a tower of strength. Mr. Kinaird had at length gone to his room, declaring that he would leave his night-lamp burning so that he might be ready to do anything at any minute. The

toddy that Dr. De Saussure was to take as his nightcap, was still untasted on the library table.

All that day, Barbara had been wretchedly depressed. The excitement of her home-coming had quickly worn away, and left her with a reaction that amounted to physical pain. The simplicity of the old house, after the lavish elegance of Mr. Kinaird's country mansion, affected her with a miserable feeling akin to homesickness, which, in its turn, aroused remorse. Cameron's presence, too, filled her with a sense of the change that had come into her life. His very friendliness and grave courtesy reminded her that she must at once speak to her mother and aunt about leaving the place. Something beneath the gentleness of his demeanor told her that he was unhappy, and the knowledge added to her own heartache.

In addition to these conflicting emotions, she had, also, longed to see Darcy, and wondered not a little when he did not come, her woman's instinct, when he sent the roses, convincing her that his absence was intentional. In her own unhappiness she learned a keener sympathy with his loneliness and suffering.

That evening, when Bunting drove up to the corner of the piazza, and told them of the runaway and Darcy's accident, she had sped down the road to the gate with a terrible dread at her heart. As she had bent with Cameron over Darcy's unconscious body, she heard, with every faculty keenly alive, Cameron's words of explanation. They both forgot, at that moment, the restraint that had come between them. With a swift intuition, she raised her eyes to his.

"This is his reparation," she had whispered.

"It was not needed," he said, with choking voice. "Did he not know that I understood?"

As she recalled the scene now, in the dreariness of her vigil, Barbara found her gratitude going out to Cameron in a way that might have seemed strange to her had she been

able to reason calmly just then. Every now and again, the ticking of the tall clock on the stairway would come out of the heavy stillness with a startling distinctness, and then be swallowed up once more. Through the open windows she heard the cry of an owl, shivering itself upon the night, and, if she listened, the house seemed filled with eerie noises, until the silence returned and beat against her brain.

After a long while, Cameron came out. She followed him down the stairs and into the library, without speaking.

"He seems easier," he said, gently, in answer to her questioning eyes. "Won't you go now and try to rest?"

"I can't."

They stood without speaking for some moments; then, with that sensation of remoteness from the every-day world and its canons which comes upon one in night hours of watching when death is near, Barbara said:

"Do you remember saying to me, as we drove into New York one day, that I should step back into my old world again?"

"Yes; I remember every incident of that day."

"The world itself is changed," she said, very slowly. "It will never be the same again." She leaned her head against the tall mantelpiece, and sighed.

"No," he murmured, "it will never be. You were right that day. 'The unfinished window in Aladdin's tower, unfinished must remain.'"

Tears welled to her eyes.

"Don't," she entreated. "I cannot bear to think that you are unhappy."

The longing to ask her if she were unhappy almost overmastered him, and, in his struggle to deny himself this satisfaction from her lips, he turned away abruptly. It was only for a moment; then he said, in a hushed voice:

"I am going back to him now. I want you to stay down here, if you won't go to your room. I shall come to you soon again."

She shivered. "It is so silent," she

whispered. Then, seeing the troubled shadow in his eyes, she added: "I will stay here. Go now. He may want you."

It was impossible to keep still; she moved from room to room, scarcely able to see in the dim light stealing through the open shutters from the waning moon. As she passed from the drawing-room into the front hall, the moon's rays, falling through the narrow strips of glass on each side of the door, struck on Darcy's hat where it had been thrown upon the low card-table. The sight pierced her with a horrible suggestion of the futility to him of such things now, and she took it up, and carried it into the back hall. Then she paced to and fro, waiting.

After a long time, Miss Jane came down, moving noiselessly in her knitted sandals. She started at sight of Barbara.

"You here, child?" she exclaimed. "Why are you not in bed?"

Barbara followed her into the pantry, and helped her crack the ice, and Miss Jane, having nothing to do for the moment, began to talk.

"It all comes of Cameron's tearing over the country behind four horses. He says himself that if it had not been for the leaders being so intractable he could have stopped the others."

Barbara looked up to her aunt, appealingly.

"Don't let him hear you say that. He is genuinely distressed."

"He ought to be," Miss Jane said, with grim determination, broken-hearted about her favorite's desperate plight.

"Mr. Cameron is a splendid whip," Barbara went on, miserably. "If he could not control the horses, no one could."

Miss Jane's nerves were unstrung.

"Don't talk fashionable jargon to me at such a time, Barbara. I never suggested that he let the horses run away on purpose."

Barbara made no answer, and Miss Jane, suddenly feeling very tired and nervous, said, with asperity:

"If you hadn't come home in such

an absurd way, it might not have happened." Then, conscious of her own weakness and injustice, she lost her temper, and drew the dish away.

"That is enough. And don't look so! You are not the first woman who has been at the bottom of such things."

Barbara regarded her in speechless amazement. Then she said, slowly:

"I forgive you that because I know you are overwrought."

"I shall never forgive you if he dies," Miss Jane returned. "You have broken the hearts of two men because you didn't know your own mind, and now one of them is dying."

Barbara's face became very white, but it was not anger that she felt. Instead, a whirlwind of emotion swept through her, and she cried:

"I know it now, Aunt Jane! Have pity on me!"

Her aunt watched her, the angry flush in her face giving way before the sympathy that Barbara craved. She touched the girl on her bowed head.

"You are like the rest of women," she said, sternly, but more gently. "We never know—until it is too late."

As the cold, damp dawn was stealing into the house, heavy with the fragrance of jasmine and roses, Cameron brought Barbara the message she had waited for all night. Darcy had roused, and asked for her.

XIV

MR. KINAIRD had asked Miss Jane to accompany him on a drive toward the river; and, now that Darcy was at last out of danger, and convalescing rapidly, she had consented.

"Do you know why I chose this road?" he said, as the gate swung to behind the low buggy.

Miss Jane assumed a becoming doubt.

"Because it is the best?"

"Because I remember it the best. You see I do not forget that we always rode and drove this way."

"In the long ago," she said, pensively. Then she added, with a trace

of briskness: "It is my favorite road. Moreover, the sun is at one's back, going in this direction."

"And I had another reason."

She frowned at the dashboard, not having expected anything like this.

"Of course," she said, hurriedly, "you must have been very much beset with ennui. This distressing accident, coming so soon after your arrival, must have made the days very dreary."

"Dreary! I have not known a moment's dreariness. I was disturbed at your anxiety, certainly, but now all that is past."

"No, it isn't," she replied, breathing more easily as she felt the reins of conversation in her hands. "Barbara is a source of great anxiety to me."

"Barbara is a charming young lady."

"So both those young men think."

"Oh," Mr. Kinaird exclaimed, his eyes twinkling, "and you mean she thinks both those young men charming?"

"You were always clever." She folded her silk-gloved hands in her lap, and began to enjoy her ride.

"But she has a preference?" he asked.

Miss Jane shrugged her shoulders.

"I never understood girls, and I was long ago wise enough to find it out."

Mr. Kinaird laughed, appreciatively.

"All the same," he said, "I think I can see that Miss Barbara prefers to live near home."

"What have you seen?"

"Nothing to warrant that assertion except by inference. I saw that she didn't care to live away from it."

"I know what you mean; but, if she married Mr. Cameron, she need not live away from it."

"Ah!" Mr. Kinaird exclaimed, smiling, "we come back to one thing I had to say to you."

"I don't quite see how, but—what is it?"

"He is going away, a long distance away. He asked me to tell you so. I think he shrinks from speaking of it just yet."

The buggy was churning its way

through a short sand-bar at the moment, and Miss Jane leaned back in her seat.

"He is a gentleman. Barbara has not treated him right."

"He took his chances, and lost. He loves her, but I do not think this will spoil his life," Mr. Kinaird replied.

"I admit that I wanted to separate them, but I did not think it would be like this."

They drove past the little negro church, standing among its gaunt red graves amid the pines, and up the shaded slope beyond. Miss Jane was thinking deeply.

"I believe it was all that woman's doing, after all," she said, impetuously. "Barbara would be just the kind of girl not to forgive him anything like that."

Mr. Kinaird turned to her in surprise.

"What do you know of that?" he asked.

"Nothing; but I suspect much. Yes, I see it all now. I builded better than I knew when I sent Barbara on to you."

"He is going to Japan," Mr. Kinaird said, after a pause.

"And the place? I always thought it was an absurd investment. Of course, he will not feel the expense, but it will go to the dogs now." She spoke bitterly.

"I have bought it." He said it so quietly that Miss Jane did not catch the meaning of the words for a minute. When she did, a conflict of emotions held her dumb.

"You do not mind?" he asked, a timid appeal in his tones. "I could not bear to see it go to—a stranger."

"You are very good, you are always good. I thank you—Jerrold." She coughed a little after the word, struggling between her prudence and her gratitude.

He took off his hat in the balmy air of the approaching evening, and Miss Jane reached for it, and placed it on her lap, sighing tenderly.

While they drove on past wide cotton fields, Cameron, whom Mrs.

Walsingham had just sent down from Darcy's room, joined Barbara upon the front steps.

"Will you walk with me?" he asked. "Your mother says I need fresh air."

"Come, then. You are just in time."

He thought she was looking particularly lovely in her simple gown of white muslin, with her arms and neck half bare, and the dark masses of her hair lying loosely above her face.

"Shall we go to the Bottoms?" he suggested, as she started down the stairs.

She gave him a half-startled glance, hesitating.

"Yes," she murmured. "I have not been there yet."

"Nor I. I was waiting."

As they passed under the windows of Darcy's room, they could hear Mrs. Walsingham reading to him with her charmingly modulated voice.

"Dr. De Saussure says Ralph may try to walk to-morrow," Barbara remarked.

"And I am to help him," Cameron replied. "We were just now talking about it."

She looked at him with the quick gratitude he had learned to expect whenever he did a kindness for Darcy.

When they came to the crest of the hill by the barn, from which the loveliest view of the place might be had, Cameron stopped her, pointing to the azure of the mountains.

"Do you remember wishing once that you might get beyond them?"

"Yes; it was a very childish wish."

"Why?" he asked, feeling a great desire this afternoon to reach once more beneath the surface of their reserve.

"I have been beyond."

He waited for her to say more, but, when she was silent, he asked:

"And would you rather have remained in ignorance of the knowledge that lies beyond?"

"Would you call it knowledge, or wisdom?"

"It is wisdom only if we do not forget."

"I shall not forget."

Their eyes met as she turned and led the way down the hill toward the lowlands. Her heart contracted as she realized all that she had made him suffer, but the shock of her own awakening to certain phases of life was as yet too strong upon her to make it possible to speak of it lightly. She did not disturb the silence that fell upon them now, letting it be a tacit expression of their understanding and their estrangement. Not until they had passed the gloom of the shadow thrown by the tall pines on top of Graveyard Hill, and struck the sandy road leading straight to the creek, did Cameron say anything.

"I have so much to talk to you about that I have waited to bring you here."

"Will it hurt you?" she asked, nervously. "Must you say it?"

"It is the outcome of so much pain," he answered, "that it will almost bring peace to speak of it."

"You asked me to forget," she exclaimed, wounded by the cynicism of his words, "but you will not let me."

"You have just told me that you could not. You are right, of course." There was no reproach in his voice now. Barbara said nothing.

He stood to one side of the little footpath as she went lightly over the split log across the brook, and on to the bridge of the creek. She sat down on the low girder.

"Yes, it must be," he said, softly, after they had watched the eddying water for some moments. "I want you to know that I am going away—to Japan."

She put up her hand with an impulsive gesture, looking at him.

"I have long wanted to go there," he went on, sitting down beside her. "It will give me inspiration for my work."

She remembered his telling her in this very spot that it was she who was to be his inspiration here.

"You must not do this," she said, her voice trembling. "It is I who must go, not you."

"What a man you must think me to be!" he said, with light reproach; but tears sprang to Barbara's eyes.

"Do you not see what I mean?" she cried. "Why do you make me say to you that I cannot any longer remain here in your home?"

"And you would deny me that pleasure?" he asked, sadly. "Then I can tell you that it is not my home any longer. I have sold it to Mr. Kinaird."

Barbara, looking straight before her, was struggling to be calm. Not for an instant did she misconstrue his motive in this act, his chivalrous consideration for her. And she had just reproached him for humiliating her!

"Will you not speak to me?" he murmured, after a silence that seemed to him very long.

"I cannot; my heart is too full." She rose, and moved over to the other side of the bridge, and in a minute he went to her.

"Don't let it distress you," he said. "I think Mr. Kinaird was always a little jealous that some one else than himself had bought the place. I believe I can sympathize with his reverence for it." He put out his hand, thinking Barbara was about to turn away, and, as he did so, she caught it in her own.

"I have no words in which to tell you how I honor you," she exclaimed. She raised his hand quickly to her lips, and held it there an instant.

They walked back slowly to the house, the twilight deepening about them, cool and dank in the low meadows. As they stopped by the storm-house, and Barbara plucked a handful of Cherokee roses from a roadside bush, a number of noisy negroes on their mules rode by from the fields. A moment later, and the southern night closed down, luminous with its pulsing stars.

"Barbara," Miss Jane called from the drawing-room, after supper, where she and Mr. Kinaird were playing cribbage, "if you and Mr. Cameron are not asleep out there, come in and make a game of pachisi. My arithmetic for cribbage is exhausted."

Barbara sighed.

"That dreadful pachisi! It is Aunt Jane's only weakness. Do you think we might escape to the garden?"

Miss Jane came to the French window, and stepped out.

"Come on," she said. "I can't see you, and I know you don't want to, but you must."

Barbara brought the well-worn board from the library, and divided the colors.

"There is so little light," she said, looking at the tall silver candelabra on the mantel.

"Any more will draw insects," Miss Jane declared. "I can play with my eyes shut," she added, settling herself comfortably to her favorite game.

"It has that effect on me, too," Barbara replied, rattling her dice.

"Go on," Miss Jane exclaimed; "I've thrown."

It soon became evident that Mr. Kinaird enjoyed the game also, and Miss Jane's delight in frustrating his progress grew correspondingly. She devoted herself to the purpose of defeating him, leaving Cameron to take care of Barbara.

"You seem positively vindictive," Barbara laughed, when Miss Jane sent her opponent's last man back from near the foot of his ladder with a determined click of the counter.

"Play!" the old lady commanded. She never wasted energy in talking while playing pachisi. Barbara threw, and sent her aunt back.

"How did you do that?" Miss Jane asked, sharply. She threw double five, and came out with flying colors. "I'm after you again, my friend," she said, with a dry smile, to Mr. Kinaird, "but I'll punish Barbara, in the meantime, just to prolong the game."

Mrs. Walsingham rustled through the room in her black silk, and went out on the piazza.

"Ralph is asleep," she said, in answer to Barbara's glance.

"Be careful, Barbara. You are not playing fair." Miss Jane moved the ivory counter two spaces with the tip of her long finger.

Mrs. Walsingham, walking the piazza, paused at the open window.

"You look so warm," she said. "It is delicious out here."

"Never mind, Emeline," Miss Jane called out, abstractedly, but she handed her turkey-tail fan to Mr. Kinaird. "I don't need it," she said, "except for these odious insects." He fanned her gently as they played on.

Cameron, by a lucky throw, swept his last man home, and leaned back in his chair to watch the others. It was like a bit of refined stage setting, he thought, the large, high room with its dozen or so of paintings that glowed dimly in the insufficient light of the candles, the delicate old furniture, the quaint figure of Miss Jane, Mr. Kinaird's old-fashioned devotion, Barbara's beauty, touched by an unwonted listlessness just then. That sensation of aloofness, of being merely a looker-on and an alien, came upon him with stronger force than ever before. Neither into the other-day world of Miss Jane and her lifelong admirer, nor into Barbara's younger, more ardent life had he been able really to enter. As he heard Mrs. Walsingham's steps drawing nearer the windows, he slipped quietly out, and joined her.

"Are you going to give an old lady your company?" she asked, putting her hand upon his arm.

"I have sought yours," he answered.

She pressed his arm gently.

"Your own mother?" she asked.

"Was she like you?"

"I am said to be like her."

"I wanted to speak to you," she returned, her voice shaking slightly. "Jane has told me of your intention to leave us. I am so sorry."

"I hope you will miss me," he answered, trying to speak easily, but genuinely touched by her unspoken sympathy.

"We shall all miss you. You have become one of us."

"Really!" he exclaimed. "You could not say anything to please me more."

"You never doubted it, surely?"

"Yes; and it made me very lonely—

for I had become one of you, you see."

Mrs. Walsingham sighed; she had always been his friend.

"I know what your loneliness is," she said, softly; "but you are young, and life holds much sweetness for all of us—for you, I hope, very much."

He stood long at his window that night, looking out over the sleeping place, shrouded in the gloom of its mighty oaks, upon which no moon was shining. On his other hand, the garden lay, an undistinguishable mass of shadow. Somewhere on the opposite side of the house, he heard a shutter thrown back upon its hinges, and he knew that Barbara also was looking out upon the night. But, upon her night, he felt that already the sun was rising.

XV

"BARBARA," Darcy called, as he went toward her with his swinging gait, "I thought you had promised me not to be so much alone."

"I was not alone," she said, smiling up at him from her seat in an arbor in the garden. "I had my thoughts, and they were all of you."

"And now that I have come," he asked, sitting down by her, "do I drive the thoughts away?"

"As the sun does the moonlight," she whispered; "as a greater love, the lesser."

She ran her fingers lightly through his wavy hair as he looked upon her, his heart thrilling with the ineffable joy that was not yet wholly his own when he thought that she loved him.

"It still eludes me, Barbara. I cannot realize that you are mine; that, knowing me as you do, you take me of all the world to love—to let love you."

"Knowing you as I do proves the strength of your love, and has not that proved my trust in you?"

His face clouded.

"How can you speak of trust?" he asked. "I have failed so much!"

"But you have conquered, too," she murmured, placing her hand in his.

"With you near me," he said, as he drew her to him, "I shall conquer always. Ah! if you knew the terrible loneliness of those days!"

"I know something of it," she sighed, letting her arm steal about his neck. "And now he has to bear it, alone."

"Yes," Darcy answered, sadly, "I cannot forget that."

"He had become very fond of you, Ralph," she said, after a little time. "I think he wanted you to know it."

"Did he ever tell you," Darcy asked, with an effort, "that I had told him all?"

"He would not have done that. No, I never knew."

Darcy's voice grew harsh with his emotion, and he drew away from Barbara.

"It was when he tried to thank me for saving his life. I could not stand that, and I told him of that moment when I longed for his death."

"It was but a moment," she cried, in a helpless wish to banish from his face the pain that was making it old.

"It was an eternity," he groaned. "I saw my naked soul."

He stood before her, the pallor of his recent illness increased by the depth of his suffering, all the turmoil of his spirit, which she had striven to ally, strong within him again.

"I am not fit to be your lover," he breathed, hoarsely. "I am not to be trusted. I have the passions of a devil with the weakness of a child. I do not deserve to step into this happiness over the pain of the man I wronged."

"Ralph," she exclaimed, confronting him, the sharp note of reproof in her voice forcing him to meet her eyes, "you have wronged no one but yourself, until this moment, but now you wrong me."

He struggled with his desire for an instant, and then threw his arms about her.

"I never shall again," he murmured. "I forgot how your love ennobles me."

"Do you not see that it makes you mine," she asked, turning his face that she might see his eyes, "just as it makes me yours?"

"Oh, Barbara," he cried, "my love for you is my life!"

Half an hour later they were walking up and down the south walk of the garden, about whose thick shrubbery the evening's shadows were fast gathering. Already the sunset colors had faded under the clear brilliance of a crescent moon.

"And you do not want to go away anywhere?" Darcy was asking.

"Not until long afterward," she replied; "not until we begin to get a little tired of each other. Then take me anywhere you choose."

"At that rate we shall never see the world," he responded, putting an arm around her, and bending his face to hers.

Miss Jane's voice, calling to them from the end of the piazza, made them turn.

"She does not want me to keep you out in the night air," Barbara said, as Darcy stopped her under the branches of a Spanish bayonet. "I believe she is more afraid of your slipping through my fingers than I am myself."

"What cause have you to be afraid?" he laughed. "You could not drop me from your open arms."

They lingered under the arbor by the gate, loath to leave the perfumed twilight of the garden. Miss Jane came again to the end of the piazza, and looked anxiously in their direction; then she went back to Mr. Kinaird.

"Ralph," Barbara asked, smiling, "have you been blind to a gentle comedy near by?"

He looked at her, puzzled.

"Love is always blind," he replied.

"And men! How much you miss!"

He opened his eyes, questioningly.

"No; I am not going to tell you," she laughed. "I shall keep my dainty Watteau for myself."

"You don't mean—?" he said, and stopped abruptly.

She nodded. "Yes. Isn't it delicious?"

But Darcy became suddenly very sober.

"Ralph, if you are going to lose your sense of humor, I won't marry you!" she exclaimed.

"It isn't that, Barbara. I suppose their hearts are young, and that is all that counts, only——"

"What?" she asked.

"It's absurd, I suppose, but it seems to jar the harmony of our paradise."

"You ridiculous boy!" she cried; "and I said you were blind! But don't you see that neither of them is in earnest?"

"Barbara," Miss Jane called again. "If you don't come in with Ralph, I shall not be responsible."

"As though any one had asked her to be!" Barbara murmured, stooping, nevertheless, to unlatch the gate; but Darcy drew her back a moment longer.

Miss Jane was very prettily flushed at the supper-table that evening, and quite spoiled her first cup of tea by putting in four lumps of sugar. A damask rose glowed upon her breast, and Barbara noted that its twin adorned the lapel of Mr. Kinaird's coat. In spite of what she had said to Darcy, Barbara had a sudden misgiving as she watched her aunt's preoccupied manner. Mr. Kinaird devoted himself to Mrs. Walsingham with marked assiduity. Once Barbara caught Darcy's eyes gleaming at her over the big bowl of Jacqueminots in the centre of the table, and shook her head, dubiously. When they had finished the raspberries, Miss Jane turned to her sister.

"Emeline, will you tell Cæsar that he may go now? Mr. Kinaird has something to say to you." For an instant, her gray eyes sought Barbara's with almost a flash of defiance. Then, she fell to studying the rings upon her fingers. Again, Barbara caught Darcy's look. The corners of his mouth twitched, and she saw a glint of triumph in his eyes.

"My dear madam," Mr. Kinaird began, with a slight cough that might have been due to the raspberries, "you

have surely been aware of my lifelong devotion to your sister, a devotion which she has never felt that her heart could respond to until now. To-night she has made me very happy by consenting to be my wife."

"Jane!" Mrs. Walsingham gasped, reaching for her handkerchief, and entirely ignoring Mr. Kinaird.

"Now, Emeline," exclaimed Miss Jane, righting herself suddenly, "I really must ask you not to cry. I appreciate your surprise, for I am very much surprised myself, but there is no need for tears." She tossed her gray curls with a decision that brought a smile to Darcy's lips.

"You needn't laugh, either, Ralph," she said, turning upon him, "though, of course, I expect that, and would rather have it than wailing."

Mrs. Walsingham, leaning back in her chair, looked from one to another.

"Say something, Barbara," she whispered.

"Never mind," Miss Jane said, bluntly, laughing a little, "I know exactly how you are feeling."

Darcy turned toward Mr. Kinaird.

"What shall we do without Miss Jane?" he asked.

"That's what I've been thinking myself," that lady interrupted, without ceremony; "and what I am going to do without each one of you I'm sure I don't know. But Jerrold has something else to say to you, Emeline," she added, after a pause which no one thoroughly understood but herself. She glanced at Mr. Kinaird, and nodded.

"What Miss Jane wishes me to say," he responded, smiling, "is that, as the prelude has already been so long, we have decided to be married at once."

"You will go away at once, Jane, after the—afterward?" Mrs. Walsingham asked, trembling with the shock of her surprise.

"Of course, Emeline. I shall need the change of scene to make me realize what has happened, and I must show myself up north." Then she added, shaking her curls: "But just as soon

as I have let those people see that Jerrold has not married a heathen, I'll come back." She turned to Ralph, and nodded significantly. "And that reminds me."

Mr. Kinaird held up his hand in dissuasion.

"Not to-night, my dear," he said.

Miss Jane instantly became determined. "Certainly," she exclaimed. "You have given your news; now I am going to give mine."

"I meant it for a wedding surprise," he murmured, a little discomfited; "but you know best, my dear."

"Yes," smiled Miss Jane, not disposed to question that statement, and, turning to Barbara, she added: "I will come back, but it must be as your guest, for Jerrold has settled Rivoli upon you."

Barbara looked at Mr. Kinaird in speechless amazement.

"It is true, my dear," the old gentleman said, apologetically. "I meant to give you the title-deeds on your wedding-day; but, perhaps, this is better."

Barbara rose, and went to him, her face pale with emotion. Something he saw in her eyes made him stand up before her, saying, earnestly:

"You are not going to refuse, child?

You cannot. It is my wedding gift to you—and your husband."

Then Barbara, unable to speak, put her arms about his neck, and kissed him.

Miss Jane rose.

"I don't think of any more news," she said, brusquely. "Suppose we have a game of pachisi, or go on the piazza, or do something ordinary. I'm afraid I sha'n't sleep to-night."

She slipped her hand through Mr. Kinaird's arm, and Mrs. Walsingham went to light the candles in the drawing-room. At the door Miss Jane paused, and turned her head.

"Don't take that boy out into the night air, Barbara," she said, nodding toward Darcy. Then, as Mr. Kinaird led her on, she added: "How they will ever be able to get along without me I do not see!"

Darcy unhooked the bowed shutters of the French window, and held out his hand to Barbara.

"Come," he said.

On the piazza, the light from the crescent moon sifted through the rose-vines, and fell about them with its perpetual mystery. Darcy turned, and took her in his arms.

"Sweetheart," he whispered, "suppose we had had to wait so long!"



DID HE STILL HAVE THEM?

GERALD—A fellow threatened to blow my brains out to-day.

GERALDINE—Did he do it?



"HE that putteth his trust in riches shall come to naught," but he that putteth his riches in trusts shall draw dividends the year long.

LOST

YOU saw the headstone, low and old,
 Slate, where the marble rose in ranks,
 And not the simplest flower told
 Of tears or thanks.

Beneath the willow there within
 The green close by a highway set,
 She lay unshriven of her sin
 That was love's debt.

For, carved in letters deeper than
 The evil in her maiden heart,
 This record of her trespass ran
 In rudest art:

"Here lies a mother not a wife,
 Her name, O stranger, ponder well;
 The righteous gains eternal life,
 The sinner, hell."

But Nature, that divines the right,
 Had crept in moss to hide her shame,
 Nor left, for unforgiving sight,
 A letter of her name.

HARRISON S. MORRIS.



HIS UNCERTAINTY

"I WONDER," dubiously cogitated Mr. Walker Farr, the eminent 10-20-
 &-30-cents-admission tragedian, "whether——"
 He paused, as the clamor of the audience rose higher and higher.
 "——they are applauding my efforts, or daring me to come out?"



THE RETORT UNCOMPLIMENTARY

MRS. HOYLE—My husband is very hard to please.
 MRS. DOYLE—One wouldn't judge it to look at you, dear.

TO-MORROW AT DAWN

By Rose K. Weekes

ON either side the gorge the rich brown rocks rose sheer to the bright, blue sky. Below among the stones, a brook ran brawling, whose fresh water, together with a convenient fissure in the cliff, made the ravine a desirable rendezvous for the Iskul Division of the Revolutionary Committee of Macedonia. A score of these patriots, crouching round a fire of logs, were debating the fate of two distinguished prisoners, Sir Richard Surtees, K.C.B., of the English diplomatic service, and Jocelyn, his youngest son.

To be tried for one's life in an unknown tongue is an unnerving experience. Jocelyn had a high conception of the stoicism incumbent upon an English gentleman aged thirteen, but, after watching their fiery gesticulations for five minutes, he felt that he could bear it no longer. Creeping up closer to Sir Richard, he slipped his warm little hand into his father's slim, white fingers.

"Father," he said, "father, what are they saying now?"

Sir Richard looked down with his languid smile. "That gentleman in the gold-braided waistcoat, Jocelyn, is urging his friends to shoot us."

Jocelyn sighed.

"I don't see why they want to shoot you or me. We weren't doing them any harm; we were just merely traveling."

"It is not a question of the harm we have done them by our lives. They are considering the benefit we may do them by our deaths. European intervention in Macedonia is what they want, and, if they can secure that by

getting rid of us, why, what is a murder or so compared with the freedom of their fatherland?"

"Don't be satirical; you're not to be satirical," said Jocelyn, wriggling yet a little closer. "And don't look bored; you know you can't be bored when you're wondering whether I'm to be shot or no. What's Sheepskin-coat saying?"

"He's counseling them to hold us to ransom, as they held Miss Stone. He is now assuring them that he has sons himself."

"Father, couldn't you tell him that, if they shoot us, Chamberlain'll come along and smash up their rotten old Committee and Macedonia into the bargain? Couldn't you put it *very* strong, and just make them curl up?"

"I am afraid they might not believe me, Jocelyn."

"I don't want to be shot," Jocelyn murmured, rubbing his cheek against Sir Richard's hand. "There's such heaps of things I want to do; and we were going to have such a ripping time together, now I'm better. And you've got that thing in Constantinople, and there's nobody can do it but you." Jocelyn habitually referred to his father's diplomatic missions as things. "Do you really think they'll kill us, father?"

"I cannot tell, Jocelyn. Your friend in the gold braid is now suggesting a consultation with the Central Committee at Sofia. I think we are remanded for the present."

"Oh, bother!" was Jocelyn's comment.

It was even so, however; the men round the fire rose and dispersed, and

one, approaching the prisoners, waved them back into the cave that was their prison, and sat stolidly down outside.

The prison was luxuriously furnished with a couple of filthy sheepskin rugs and a bundle of straw. Sir Richard kicked them into a corner, and looked round fastidiously for a spot that was fit to sit on. Tall, languid, bored and aristocratic, he was the very type of the successful diplomatist; and a successful man he was, but not a happy one. His three elder sons had turned out discreditably; Jocelyn, the Benjamin of his old age, was delicate; his wife had died of consumption. The bitterness of life had been Sir Richard's portion for many years, and it had left its mark on his temperament.

"Are you cold, Jocelyn? Come and share my coat; I dare say I can find room in it for such a stout person as you."

"No, I'm not one bit cold. But I don't mind coming. You are so ridiculously particular about your things, daddy; I mean the way they fit, and it'll be good for you to have it stretched. Besides," Jocelyn added, nestling into his place, "you really are rather comfortable to be close to. When do you think we shall know?"

"Not for some time, I expect."

"Do you think dying's very dreadful?"

"I have had no personal experience, Jocelyn."

"You aren't to talk nonsense. You know perfectly well I meant you've seen people die. Does it—does it hurt much, father?"

"Occasionally."

Jocelyn sighed.

"You are sure you're warm? You wouldn't care for one of those sheepskins?"

"What! those beastly, fleasome things?" said Jocelyn, with great scorn.

"I could wrap it over my coat so that it should not touch you."

"Oh, father! I just should like to see you wearing one of them! I'm perfectly warm, really. I haven't

coughed one bit since I've been up here. It's like the open-air cure, I think. And the goat's milk is most awfully good for me; it's just as beastly as medicine."

"You were coughing last night in your sleep."

"Was I? That was just habit; you don't know how hard it is to break yourself of bad habits, because you don't ever try. Besides, if we're going to be shot pretty soon, it doesn't matter much if I do cough, does it?"

"Andreas was not shot down with the others; he may bring us help from Iskul."

"Andreas is an old duck," said Jocelyn, sleepily. "And didn't he just clean boots well! I made him show me exactly how he did it, and, when we get back, I'm going to do yours for the next levee; or when you get your G.C.B., father. You will for this, won't you?"

"For being kidnapped in Macedonia, Jocelyn?"

"No, for the Constantinople thing. I expect you'll be a baron by the time you die. And, when I begin to diplomize, I shall soon be an earl." Jocelyn's voice died away in a murmur; he was fast asleep.

The Albanian who had sons was phlegmatically chewing tobacco; his petticoats bristled with offensive weapons, including three sanguinary curved knives and a pair of pistols with Turkish initials upon them. In the ravine, a dozen others were taking their siesta, each elaborately armed. Their prisoners had not so much as a pocket-knife between them. To escape was impossible. Sir Richard cursed Macedonia—and England, which had sent him there.

Toward sunset, hearing an unusual stir, he looked out again, and saw that the absentees had returned, bringing others with them. They certainly could not have been to Sofia. He afterward learned that they had met their leader on the way.

In a few minutes, Sir Richard was summoned to their presence; they had dispensed with the attendance of Joce-

lyn, who did not understand a word of their language. Sir Richard laid him down, still asleep, and went forth in his shirt-sleeves to confront the tribunal.

Shortly after, Jocelyn roused. He felt about sleepily for his father, and, not finding him, woke up completely. He sat up and looked around. "Father!" he called, but nobody answered. Thoroughly frightened, he dared not at first look out. When he did, the Albanian sent him back, but not before he had caught a glimpse of Sir Richard's shirt-sleeves — unique possessions in that locality. Jocelyn's first anxiety was stilled; they had not dragged his father away to shoot him without even a good-bye. He went back; and, because the sunset air was chill, and he wished only to please his father, he wrapped himself up in the sheepskins, which made him feel very ill. Jocelyn had the soul of a hero. But perhaps physical disgust took off his anxiety; for, if he had had nothing to think of except his father's fate and his own, he would have found it hard to keep hold on composure. And Jocelyn contended tears. It was almost an hour before Sir Richard came back.

"Well, father?"

"Well, Jocelyn?"

"I wrapped myself in these beastly things to keep warm," said Jocelyn, earnestly regarding Sir Richard's face, which was white and quiet. "Wasn't it good of me?"

"Very good."

"The stones are uncommonly hard," said Jocelyn, suggestively.

Sir Richard sat down, and drew the boy into his arms. "Is this more comfortable?"

"You really are tolerably intelligent at times," Jocelyn murmured, curling up like a kitten. He fixed his big brown eyes on Sir Richard's. "Father."

"Well, Jocelyn?"

"We're to be shot, aren't we?"

"Not both of us, Jocelyn."

"Oh! Which?"

"I am given my choice."

"Father, you'll let me go, won't

you?" said Jocelyn, after a breathless pause.

"God forbid!"

"Oh, father, you must! I just can't go on living without you!"

"You misunderstand me, Jocelyn," said Sir Richard, with his peculiar, melancholy smile. "One of us is to be kept alive; the other is to be shot to-morrow at dawn. That other, Jocelyn, must be you."

Jocelyn, with a little gasp, lay still. He had what he desired, but not what he expected. Presently he said, in a voice anxiously polite:

"I'm so awfully glad it's to be me, father. It's most awfully good of you to let me."

"Ah, you don't understand why I do it. You're rather surprised, Jocelyn, is that it?"

"No, father, not really. Of course, it's quite right—your life's ever so much more valuable than mine. Besides, you know, I like it better this way; you're just being extra brave and extra good to me." Jocelyn's voice sounded quite eager and convinced.

"My life more valuable than yours?" Sir Richard repeated. "Yes, you are right. I have what you call that thing to do at Constantinople; as you said, no one but me can do it. It is an affair of the first importance; I am bound in honor to be at my post. I dare say you have come across the verse:

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honor more."

"Oh, yes; like the man on the plank in Cicero," said Jocelyn, immensely relieved. "I see."

"I'm afraid I don't follow your classical allusion, Jocelyn."

"Oh, Cicero says there were two shipwrecked men on a plank, and one was a very important johnny, and the other was just an ordinary person, not worth a cent. And the important johnny kicked the other man off, because there wasn't room for two, and he thought he ought for the sake of the state. And Cicero says he was jolly right."

"I think I have heard you remark that you considered Cicero's morals defective."

Jocelyn blushed. "But he was all right there."

"The point of view makes the difference, perhaps."

"M'yes," said Jocelyn, vaguely.

A pause followed, which Jocelyn broke by remarking plaintively that a flea was biting him. This trouble being relieved, he lay still, while the ribbon of blue sky overhead faded through amethyst and violet to the nameless color of shadows, and became studded with stars, shining green and blue and scarlet in all the opulent gorgeousness of a Southern sky. Sir Richard was hoping that Jocelyn had gone to sleep, but presently a small voice said:

"Father."

"Yes, Jocelyn?"

"You don't really love honor more, do you?"

"Only on this point, Jocelyn," Sir Richard answered, with dry lips.

"I don't want you to love *anything* better than me, father!"

Sir Richard suddenly put him away, and walked to the mouth of the cave. When he came back, he spoke in a voice such as Jocelyn had never heard him use, so charged was it with passion.

"I love you better than anything in the world, Jocelyn. If this could be in any other way, it should; but there's no other way. It has to be. But never think I love you the less; think anything rather than that!"

"Oh, I *am* a beast to worry you!" cried Jocelyn, stricken with remorse. "I didn't mean to. I know you do; besides, I don't know what I'm saying—all kinds of silly, idiotic things I don't mean. I don't care, father, truly!"

"You're feverish," said Sir Richard. He took him up in his arms once more. "Jocelyn, are you afraid of death?"

Jocelyn shook his head.

"So I had thought. It does not run in the family. Your brothers were afraid of it, but they were even afraid of common honesty. You are the only Surtees among them."

"You do say nasty things when you like," said Jocelyn, with a meditative sparkle. "I expect they did hate you—I would have. But you won't have anybody now."

"I shall have my profession," said the diplomatist, ironically.

"Yes, but your profession can't see that your clothes are brushed and your coffee made proper, like me. I do think you'll be lonely, father."

"Perhaps, I shall not be spared long."

"I believe you'd *like* to die," said Jocelyn, fixing his big brown eyes on Sir Richard's face.

"Do you think that at my age one finds much pleasure in living? I have not your zest, Jocelyn. Now leave off talking, and sleep; I do not wish you to appear pale to-morrow, as though you were frightened. Good night."

"Good night, father," said Jocelyn, obediently. And presently he went to sleep. He roused up once to ask, between dreams and waking, but more in dreams, for his will was in abeyance:

"You don't *really* love honor best, father?"

Dawn came cool and brilliant, spanning the east with an arc of gold. Very clear and dark, the brown rocks cut the pale sky; and high up, hanging from a cranny, a single fig-tree spread out her green fingers to the wind. As the light strengthened, Sir Richard had watched it change. It was first a shadow, then a reality, next an etching in sepia, and so through infinitesimal gradations of hue until it flaunted its green leaves, unduly bright, in the first sunlight. It was his chronometer, meting out the hours of Jocelyn's life.

And punctually with the first sunlight came the Albanian to summon Jocelyn. He looked paternally at the sleeping boy, and remarked that he was a handsome lad.

"And does His Excellency still prefer the rifle for him?"

"I prefer it," said Sir Richard, quietly.

"So! Well, I have sons of my own."

Their voices roused Jocelyn, who sat up, rubbing his eyes and yawning till he saw the Albanian. "Is it time, father?"

"Yes, Jocelyn."

"I do think it's very early to get up. Do you think they would wait while I had just a bath?"

"I don't think they would see the necessity. Are you afraid?"

"No, oh, no. Are you coming, too, just to see?"

"No, I am to stay here."

"Of course; I expect it is better." Jocelyn hesitated. "Am I to go just directly instant?"

"Yes, Jocelyn."

"Oh, very well. Good-bye, father."

He was prepared to shake hands and go away, but Sir Richard locked him in his arms, and held him close for a minute or more. "Say just once more you love me best," was Jocelyn's whispered plea.

"I love you, Jocelyn."

"Best?"

"Best of all."

Jocelyn nodded, content. "I truly am not one tiny wee scrap atom afraid, father," he said, as he went away.

Ten minutes later, Sir Richard heard the sound of a volley fired, and knew that his sacrifice was consummated.

Later, he was recalled to a world of which he was tolerably weary by the

sounds of fresh shots and of shouting. He was not interested, though he guessed what they betokened. It was of a piece with that irony of circumstance which had consistently embittered his life that rescue should come—too late. The Albanian sentinel retired on business of his own, and, when the Turkish soldiers came riding in triumph down the ravine, Sir Richard went out to meet their commander, who bowed like a Frenchman and radiated satisfaction.

"It is an honor for me to make your acquaintance, sir. I am proud to be the author of rescuing you from your infelicitous situation."

"It is a pity you were not here by sunrise," answered Sir Richard, faintly smiling as he turned toward Jocelyn's grave.

The Turk was quite indignant at his indifference. "Has he no gratitude? Have we not fought for him?" he demanded of the Albanian, who had, it may be noted, betrayed to him the secret of the gorge.

"Excellency, he has lost his son."

"But, pighead, he has saved his life!"

"Excellency," said the Albanian, "those sinners told him that one of the two should be shot and the other should die—by torture. He chose for himself torture. I think now he wishes that he had not, for then his son would have been saved. What would you have? I have had sons myself."



HIS SOLE AVOCATION

"SO your Uncle Totterly lived to the great age of one hundred and nine years! How do you account for his longevity?"

"I attribute it to the fact that he was never known to do much of anything else."

BALLADE OF FICKLENESS

WITHIN the Book of Lovers have I read,
 Within the Book of Lovers am I writ;
 Yet with small knowledge have I crowned my head
 And with scant oil my lamps of wisdom lit;
 Still one truth have I gleaned with careful wit,
 Finding the tale a hundred times retold;
 Hear, heroes brave and ladies exquisite—
 The new love is as lovely as the old.

The old love is the love we did not wed,
 The old love is the lover lost or quit,
 The damsel fickle or the gallant dead,
 And few the faithful who beside them sit;
 The new voice calls, and quick our fancies flit;
 The new hand beckons, and the old is cold,
 And straight we find—oh, wonder infinite!—
 The new love is as tender as the old.

For Rosalind had lips where roses bled,
 But Juliet's eyes were both for jewels fit;
 C'enone's tears were pearls the moonlight bred,
 Yet Helen's laughter dried them, bit by bit.
 Love's web of gold unravels, yet is knit
 Thrice stronger by each new hand's firmer hold;
 And he falls soonest who is often hit—
 The new love is as mighty as the old.

L'ENVOI

Old loves of mine, for this ye care no whit—
 New loves are ye to many a gallant bold;
 Not one but sings this song and joys in it—
 "The new love is thrice dearer than the old!"

JOHN WINWOOD.



IMPORTANT TO KNOW

DICKINSON—What is the best way to get over a disappointment in love?
ALEXANDER—That depends. Did you marry the girl?

THE SENTIMENTALISTS

By Ruth Milne

GRAY clouds shifted uneasily overhead, blown about by changing winds; every now and again, a thin drizzle of rain added to the sloppiness of the pavements, and the general discomfort of pedestrians.

Darrell closed his office door with a bang, conscious of a distinct feeling of envy for the freckle-faced office-boy, who had gone away whistling softly between his teeth. Saturday afternoon—a half-holiday—meant a great deal to the office-boy, Darrell reflected. To him, it had only meant the chance to work in uninterrupted seclusion.

He started gloomily up-town toward the bachelor apartment that he shared with Morton—journalist by profession, idler by inclination. The day had begun badly, he reflected, as he started on his twenty-block walk. In the first place, Morton was away—out of town—not to be back until he finished his special assignment; and, when Morton was away, things had a facility for going wrong. Parkins, the man who jointly valeted them, had been late—Darrell had swallowed a half-cooked breakfast in consequence, and Parkins had been more than near impertinence when his offense was mentioned, though Darrell's manner had been as little objectionable—the word was Darrell's own—as possible. Morton, now, could always manage a servant without friction, and with results. Then, the day at the office had been dull; a young lawyer in an office of his own is seldom overwhelmed with business. Even the office-boy had looked bored; the solitary clerk had appeared to be more than ever certain that he was a supernumerary—in fact, it had

only been by dint of staying at work when he might have left that Darrell had been able to convince himself that he was actually a member of "the laboring-classes," as Morton liked to call them. Saturday afternoon, and nothing to do, he reflected, striding along, head down, coat-collar up, in the penetrating drizzle; no one he cared to see, no one who expected to see him.

"Hello!" said a voice at his elbow, "if it isn't Ned Darrell!"

Darrell wheeled, almost aggressively, to find himself overtopped by a capacious umbrella, and confronted by a smile so pervading that it seemed to brighten the very atmosphere. He beamed responsively, despite his dreary mood.

"Anderson!" he said. "It's luck to happen on you—you're never in town."

"Only when I'm in the Swamp. Just going up-town to do an errand for my wife."

Darrell's smile broadened to a grin. "So you have, haven't you?" he said with apparent irrelevancy. "Another good man—let's see, I sent you a wedding-present, didn't I?"

"And never came to call. Insult to injury. Look here"—Anderson's beam became still warmer—"why not come out with me to-night, and meet my wife? Spend Sunday. It's a poor day in town."

Darrell protested, rather feebly, that he had engagements; that it was too short notice for Mrs. Anderson. But Anderson's protests to the contrary were far more fervent, and more effective.

"At the Twenty-third-street ferry,"

was his parting shot. "Last boat for our train leaves at five-ten. I'll expect you, sure."

Freed from the influence of Anderson's cheer, gloom settled once more on Darrell's shoulders, as he resumed his damp and solitary walk. Elbowed by countless passers, he wondered that the sight of one of them whom he knew—even though it had been an old college friend—should have made him consent to catch a ferry out to a suburban town on a Saturday afternoon.

"Asinine thing to do!" he commented, ruefully. "As if a rainy Sunday in town weren't bad enough, without going out of my way to spend it in the country!" He fumed for ten blocks. His empty rooms seemed a paradise; Morton might be back that evening, and at worst even cards at the club sounded like veritable dissipation, compared with what he might expect at Anderson's. He wondered vaguely and hopelessly how long they had been married, and if there were a baby. "It only needs a baby," he muttered, as he fitted his latch-key into the lock. "No, by heaven, I won't go! I'll telegraph them I'm ill—have important business—have——"

He paused on the threshold of the smoking-room, sniffing suspiciously. There was a peculiar odor; not that of stale tobacco-smoke, nor yet that of the janitor's dinner, and at any rate it was too early for the janitor's dinner. In the dusk of the Winter's afternoon, he could see nothing save splotches of light for the windows, and a shapeless mass near the fireplace.

"Morton," he said, sharply, "is that you?"

There was no answer, but something stirred, sighed, almost groaned. Seized by a sharp misgiving, Darrell hastily pressed the electric switch. There, in Darrell's favorite leather-chair, was Parkins the impertinent, sleeping, while an empty bottle beside him explained both his slumber and the peculiar and penetrating odor.

"My best whiskey!" ejaculated Darrell, wrathfully, striding to Parkins's

recumbent form. "Wake up, you brute, and get out of here!"

But Parkins remained obdurately stupefied, and Darrell had finally to put him out, a limp bundle, to be cared for by the irate janitor and two grinning hall-boys. Returning, still more depressed, he eyed the empty bottle in disgust, and began hastily packing his suit-case.

"I don't care about going there," he commented, half-audibly, "but"—with a glance around the empty, ill-smelling rooms—"only an optimistic lunatic like Morton could stand it here."

After all, he had to admit to himself that his worst fears were far from realized. Brookhurst, the suburb in which Anderson lived, was not far enough from Jersey City to leave time for more than a comfortable glance at the paper, and a yawn or two. They had, as men will, exhausted all personal conversation during the fifteen minutes on the ferry. Anderson had never been an intimate of Darrell's at college, and aside from knowing that he was a good fellow, good company, and that he possessed an adequate amount of pocket money, Darrell had very little notion what position, either financially or socially, Anderson occupied. So, remembering dismally the jokes on suburban towns, he anticipated in distressful certainty a long walk along muddy, unpaved streets to a gingerbread cottage, where Mrs. Anderson and the baby—they had been married two years, he had discovered, and there was a baby—would meet them at the door, all smiles and domestic bliss.

Darrell had formulated this picture between two yawns, and found himself pining even for the deserted rooms he had left behind, when an apparently irate brakeman shouted, "Brookhurst!" at them, and Anderson made the customary hasty exit of the New York business man, seizing Darrell's suit-case as he fled. The latter followed no less speedily, to find Anderson standing idly on the platform, watching a good-looking array of private ve-

hicles in general, and the antics of a pair of brown cobs in particular.

"Good-looking pair," Darrell commented, as the train puffed slowly out of the station. "Ought to have a larger man to hold them, though," as a nervous start of the nigh horse, at the train's farewell snort, nearly threw the little groom in covert livery from his feet.

"They'll be all right now that the train's gone," said Anderson, stepping forward and nodding familiarly to the groom in question. "Get in, Darrell. Would you like to drive them?"

His guest declined, out of politeness, though his fingers were itching to be on the reins. The little groom stepped quickly aside, and swung up to his seat in the back of the high cart, and, with the rhythmic thud-thud of horses' hoofs on macadam, they were off, down the broad, tree-lined street.

"I won't apologize for having you out in this drizzle," said Anderson, in the interval between his salutations. Darrell noticed, with a little wave of envy, how he seemed to know the occupants of every carriage that they passed, and on what friendly terms he seemed to be with most of them. "I know you don't mind it; Minnie never sends a closed rig for me, unless she thinks I'm ill."

Darrell grunted inarticulate pleasure. The fine drops of rain, driven against his face by the swift pace of the horses, dissipated his ill-humor as though it had been a sort of physical faintness. He felt ready to forgive Mrs. Anderson for being named Minnie, although as a name it was his devastation, and almost ready to forgive her the bad taste of having had a baby. He reminded himself that he did not even know the child's sex, and was preparing to find it out by a diplomatic question as to its name—the gingerbread cottage being obviously far distant from the street along which they were going—when suddenly Anderson pulled the horses down to a slower trot. They whirled fast enough, even so, through an iron gateway into a modest drive, and came to an abrupt stop be-

fore a low flight of stone steps. The little groom appeared again at the horses' heads, the hall door swung open, and Darrell followed Anderson a little confusedly—confusedly because, when the door opened, he had thought, "Now for Minnie and the baby," and, instead, there had been only a solemn young butler of impassive countenance.

Darrell's mental picture had been decidedly at fault; he admitted it gleefully as his mackintosh went into the butler's care in the square, firelit hall.

"Mrs. Handerson, sir, his at tea in the libr'y, sir," said the butler, in the tone of one who announces a momentous fact. "She says she'll be glad hif the gentlemen care to join her, sir."

Anderson nodded acquiescence as he led the way.

"You aren't given a choice, here, you see," he said. "Minnie's tea is the best there is. You might think you didn't want any, but you do."

The two men paused an instant at the threshold of the oak-paneled room. At one corner of a huge fireplace was a tea-table, cozy in its array of shining silver and thin china. Near it, a tall blonde leaned idly in a lounging-chair, a girl and a man in desultory conversation with her close by, while on a window-seat out of range of the firelight could be seen dimly two indistinct forms, engaged in a conversation which, though far from desultory, was quite worthless to the company at large, as it was entirely inaudible. Darrell had time only for a quick glance over Anderson's shoulder.

"Hello, Minnie!" said the host, advancing into the firelight. The tall blonde, a moment before so idly indifferent, sprang to her feet.

"Tom, you dear thing!" she said, in an ecstatic undertone, and Anderson's dark head bent for an instant over her golden one.

"Domestic bliss, at any rate," ejaculated Darrell, mentally; but he swallowed a sudden lump in his throat as the memory of his own home-coming to the somnolent Parkins recurred to him. Then came the introductions.

The tall blonde was, of course, Mrs. Anderson—Minnie; the near-by girl a neighbor who had "dropped in for a cup of Minnie's tea," she said, glibly; while the indistinguishable window-seat resolved itself into a young woman in a riding-habit and her attendant cavalier, whose very attitude bespoke a devotion he was at no pains to conceal. Darrell was bowing formally right and left when the girl in the habit advanced with outstretched hand.

"Oh, but I remember Mr. Darrell perfectly," she asserted, with a laugh. "I sat out two whole dances with him at your senior promenade, Tom. I was awfully flattered, but he doesn't remember me."

Darrell looked down—she was not very tall, this girl—down into the depths of brown eyes that were looking up into his own, stammered, floundered, and was finally extricated by Anderson's, "Oh, you were nothing but a school-girl then, sis."

Then it suddenly came back to him—a vague recollection of nonsense he had talked on the moonlit campus to a slender little girl with big brown eyes, who had come on because she was Anderson's sister, and who was, she had told him in confidence, wearing her first evening frock. There had been something attractive about her even then, but now—

"Of course I remember," he protested, vigorously. "We had a dance, and then I asked you for an extra—" It was a rash venture, made on the chance that only so would he have had two dances with a strange girl; but he saw by her flush of pleased amusement that he had guessed correctly.

"You do very well," she said, a little demurely. Then Anderson called him to try Minnie's tea; and he had to talk to the other girl, who told him that she saw that he had been embarrassed by Minnie and Tom, just as she used to be at first; but they always were affectionate, and, for her part, she liked it, and thought it spoke awfully well for them, after two years; only, it was a little trying for strangers, now, wasn't it? and perhaps, after all—

Just then the dressing-bell rang, and Miss Anderson, with great commotion as to the whereabouts of her hat, her gloves and her riding-crop, departed to her room, her forlorn swain making his adieus immediately thereafter; the near-by girl and her companion left in chattering haste; then for Darrell a comfortable room, where he was told he might smoke, if he wished, and the pleasures of a leisurely toilette.

"Now admit," said Miss Anderson, suddenly, "that, after all, there are compensations."

"Compensations?" echoed Darrell, a little blankly.

Dinner was over long since; the men had had their cigars in peace before the hall fire, where a man or two had dropped in, after an informal fashion, and, after the same fashion, had dropped out again. Then Anderson had suggested music, and his wife had played, brilliantly, if a trifle colorlessly, and afterward had said, "Now, Molly," and Darrell had found himself listening delightedly to Miss Anderson's voice as she sat in the dimly lighted drawing-room and played and sang, obedient to her brother's behests. It was not a very remarkable voice, Darrell admitted, though she was evidently well taught; but there was something in it, something that was just beyond reach, and, when he had decided that, he left the hall, and strolled in to lean on the piano, and look and listen, whereupon Miss Anderson had promptly stopped playing to demand of him if there were not compensations.

She only laughed, in response to his blankness.

"Oh, I know," she said, "you men in town have a notion that suburban life is all snow—or all mosquitos. It isn't so bad, now, really, is it?"

"Oh, well," said Darrell, "Tom's lucky. All this—" He glanced comprehensively around.

"Of course, grandfather left him the place," Miss Anderson acquiesced.

"But it's a case of 'all this, and heaven besides,' with Tom," protested

Darrell. "How long do you suppose he would like this sort of thing if it weren't for his wife?"

"She is a dear," said Miss Anderson, warily. "Minnie," she called, "I'll sing you your song." And she wandered idly into a little burst of melody that was full of sunshine and blue skies and bird-songs. "That is the sort of thing that Minnie likes," she said. "Now, Tom likes sentiment—heavy chords"—she struck a ponderous bass—"and minors. Do you know, I have a theory that men are more sentimental than women."

"We have more sentiment, perhaps," acquiesced Darrell; but she shook her head promptly.

"Not at all. You're sentimental—there is all the difference in the world. Now you, for instance"—she narrowed her brown eyes, and scrutinized him amusedly in the dim light—"do you remember those dances you had with me ages ago?"

"Remember!" said Darrell, fervently, if a trifle vaguely. "Do you think I've forgotten them?"

Miss Anderson nodded, sliding off the piano bench into the depths of a huge, tapestry-covered chair. "I know you have," she said.

Darrell, too, changed his position, and as, in changing, he glanced toward the door, he saw Anderson's brown hand reach out tenderly, half-abstractedly, for his wife's slender fingers. Darrell had been a stranger to that sort of thing for so long that it sent a little thrill shivering through him. After all, to have an open fire, and a little white hand to enclose in yours—Molly's hands were white and small enough as they showed in the dusk of the drawing-room. Darrell pulled a chair nearer, and sat down.

"Remember!" he echoed. "I remember far better than you do. You wore white"—this was another bold guess, based on the theory that young girls always wore white; but Molly's eyelids drooped a little, and Darrell knew that his random shot had told—"and you told me that it was your first big dance."

"And my first long frock," said Molly.

"And I told you," said Darrell, after a pause, "that I should never forget your eyes."

The girl laughed, a little uneasily, and Darrell silently congratulated himself. That was a thing that one usually said to a girl in those days, if her eyes happened to be her strong point; but there was always the chance that one had omitted it on any single occasion.

"But you *had* forgotten, then," she said, after another pause.

Darrell leaned back in his chair.

"Had I?" he said. The game was going to his head a little; it was a long time since he had played it. Or was it only the game? he pondered. Was there not something back of it all that made the game worth playing? He heard Anderson's voice in the hall, and his wife's soft-toned, ready response; better that than a non-committal grunt from some one like Morton.

"Had I?" said Darrell again, leaning forward this time.

"Hadn't you?" said the girl, with her eyelids down. It seemed to Darrell now that he could really remember her as she had been that night.

"You women never give a fellow credit for anything except—sentimentality," he said, still softly. "Sometimes, you know, we don't have this sort of thing—not because we don't want it, but because once, somewhere, we see the girl who could be the right girl; and, though we may never see her again, we don't want any one else. Do you think," said Darrell, still more softly, "that I had—quite forgotten your eyes?"

Molly looked up a little questioningly, blushed almost imperceptibly, and said nothing.

To Darrell, the next morning, as he started down the stairs, there came from the hall below a strange sound—the uncertain gurgle of an untrained laugh. He stopped short.

"If I hadn't forgotten the baby!"

he ejaculated, softly. "Well, they didn't make much fuss about it."

He descended the stairs, a look on his face of martyr-like resignation, which he fondly supposed to be one of pleased anticipation.

"So this is the baby!" he said, cheerfully, to the feminine figure—Mrs. Anderson, he supposed—bending over the small white object on the hearth-rug. Instead of answering, the figure turned, revealing the somewhat flushed countenance of Miss Molly.

"It's all right," she said, hurriedly; "you haven't got to play with him."

Darrell's set smile relaxed, and he approached the rug gingerly. The infant scion of the house of Anderson lay on his back, kicking white-shod feet in the air, and making desperate efforts to regain the dignity of an upright posture.

"He seems," volunteered Darrell, tentatively, "to be an uncommonly good sort."

"Well, of course, we think he is," said Molly, with complacency. "But, then, all babies are rather nice, if you dress them properly."

"Um," assented Darrell, dubiously. "They're all much alike, aren't they? Hasn't he got a lot of teeth, for so young a person?"

Molly eyed him, suspiciously.

"You know you don't know anything about that sort of thing," she accused. "And he has rather few teeth, and very little hair, and he doesn't look like Tom. If you want to be complimentary, say something about his size, or his intelligence. He really is large," she added, with suppressed pride.

Darrell laughed. "I'll remember," he said. "He seems to be easy to take care of—rather like a June-bug. You put him on his back, and he can't get off it."

The click of heels sounded on the stairs, and Molly turned quickly.

"Mr. Darrell's calling your son a June-bug, Minnie!" she said.

"Well, so long as he doesn't call him a nuisance," responded Mrs. Anderson, equably, "I shall not complain.

The idea of inflicting that baby on the poor man before breakfast, Molly! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"I didn't," responded Molly, with acute indignation; "Tommy and I"—Darrell made a mental note of the fact that the baby's name was Tommy—"were enjoying ourselves on the rug, when down came Mr. Darrell, and began talking about teeth; and I had to warn him that that was a delicate subject with you——"

"I don't see," protested Mrs. Anderson, calmly interrupting, "why you can't play with the boy in the nursery, if you want to play with him at all."

Molly frowned. "It's such an intolerably rainy day," she said. "He's bored to death with the nursery. Minnie, you're an unnatural mother," as Mrs. Anderson nodded to the waiting nurse. "At any rate, he didn't want to go"—as the baby gurgled an indignant protest at his departure.

Mrs. Anderson laughed, but she stood looking after the baby as he babbled in his inarticulate way upstairs, an occasional "Ma-ma!" breaking in upon the medley of detached syllables.

"Isn't that unkind of him?" said Molly, disappointedly. "Any one would think it was you he hated to leave, Minnie."

"I suppose that's all he can say," ventured Darrell, to console her.

"He can say aunt, perfectly," declared Molly, "but he just won't. Now hear that!"

A joyous shriek from the baby in the hall above came to their ears. Darrell raised questioning eyebrows, and Mrs. Anderson laughed, a little shamefacedly.

"It's Tom," she said, in explanation. "He's awfully fond of his father."

Darrell seated himself at the breakfast-table with the same little feeling of envy gnawing at his heart. Even the baby had appeared rather desirable, and that before breakfast, too. It must be fairly pleasant to have something that greeted you with a

rapturous shriek. And breakfast—he remembered with disgust the untempting meal that the indolent Parkins was wont to set before him. White linen, bright silver, something green and growing in the middle of the table, and a pretty woman smiling at you over the coffee-tray—Darrell sighed involuntarily as they rose from the table.

"Thinking of church?" queried Tom, encouragingly. "You needn't go, you know."

Darrell almost gasped, as he lighted his cigar. "Why, of course, if you all go——" he began.

"Tom isn't going," interrupted Mrs. Anderson. "He has rather a cold, and I don't think he ought to go out."

"See what it is to be well taken care of!" said Anderson, easily.

Darrell nodded. "Not so bad," he said, with a little laugh. He tried to find it absurd, but instead he was still envious.

"Then, of course, Minnie won't go." Molly's conclusion was obviously correct. Mrs. Anderson flushed, but made no protest. "I suppose I shall have to say we are all miserable sinners for four."

"Well," said Darrell, in mock resignation, "since I haven't a cold——"

"Oh, but you haven't a wife, either," protested Molly.

"Meaning?"

"That you needn't make excuses—just don't go."

Darrell looked out at the gray drizzle, glanced around the comfortable room, and then looked down into Molly's questioning, almost appealing eyes.

"I think I'll go," he said. "I think I'd—rather go."

Decidedly the game—if it were a game—was worth playing.

A rainy Sunday in a suburban town! Darrell had always pictured it the most tedious thing imaginable, a day filled full of badly suppressed yawns, a day at whose close one felt that one would gladly commit suicide to escape its repetition. Yet, though the weath-

er had been as execrable as possible, Darrell found himself genuinely regretful as the early twilight set in. It had been years since he had had a day of home life in such a home; the week-end house-parties he had indulged in were as far from it, on the one hand, as were his Sundays at the club on the other. Now he admitted to himself that he had missed it woefully. He had realized it vaguely the night before; he felt it more strongly as the day went on; as he saw Anderson looking at his wife across the round luncheon-table; as he himself took surreptitious glances at Anderson's sister.

There had been more music; Anderson had carried him off to the library to argue out a disputed point in mechanics with the aid of an encyclopedia; he had stumbled upon a long-coveted set of Swinburne—"Minnie's," Anderson had said, with possessive nonchalance; then they had called Minnie to read this and that; and then, after some imperceptible fashion, only possible in a woman's house, Anderson and his wife had slipped out of the foreground, and Darrell and Molly were left alone with the flickering fire and the fast-falling dusk. Molly was in a quiet humor, and Darrell was indulging himself with a dream of endless twilights where one talked or failed to talk, as one pleased.

"It's all compensations," he said, irrelevantly, at last.

Molly laughed. "Better than you expected, at any rate?"

Darrell nodded an emphatic acquiescence. "Better than anything. When a man's once been brought up in this kind of thing, he misses it. It's all right, I suppose, if there's a woman somewhere. But I haven't had that, you know."

"I know," said Molly, softly.

Darrell's mother had died when he was in college—she could have told him how hard it had been for him to go on with his football, and how the men had admired his pluck. She could have told him, too, that he had always been something of a hero to the

unathletic Anderson—and very much of a hero to her; that the invitation to the dance at the senior promenade had been procured for her by Tom almost as a joke—certainly as an inestimable favor. She looked at him a little wonderingly. After all, he was a mere man, this idol of her younger days; not even so successful as Tom; a little worn-looking, a little selfish, perhaps. Still, he had been her adoration; and an idol, even though its feet prove only clay, is never of quite the same material as is the rest of the world.

"Yes," said Molly, meditatively, "a man needs a woman; so does a woman need a man. Tom and Minnie make one a bit envious."

Darrell looked at her a little surprisedly. Was she, after all, not so satisfied, either?

"Well," he said, with a sigh, half pretense and half earnest, "I go back to the club to-morrow—to the club and to—" he hesitated; the fire flamed up brightly, and touched out the gold lights in Molly's hair and the depths in her brown eyes—"and to the abomination of desolations," finished Darrell, with evident sincerity.

"Do you really mind?" Molly's tone was dubious.

"Mind!" said Darrell. "If you've dreamed of something for years, and then find it, do you mind leaving it again, after two days?"

Molly flushed. She was undeniably charming; certainly the game was worth playing—if it were a game. After all, what could be better than such a home—twilight, firelight, an easy-chair—and Molly?

"You must come again, then," she said, with ready hospitality. "That will be the best proof that you liked it."

"Shall I?" said Darrell, with sudden seriousness. "I'll leave it with you." There was little in the words, but the tone was significance itself. "It means a lot, you know, after all these years. It's playing with fire, and, at my age, one hates to be burned. Shall I come again?"

There was a long pause, and Darrell's pulses quickened. "Shall I?" he persisted, leaning forward; but through the silence of her hesitation there broke a gleeful gurgle.

"Oh, there's Tommy!" Molly plainly welcomed the diversion. "Greta, wait a minute—I want to bring him down here."

Darrell murmured something uncomplimentary to the baby, as Molly hastened up the broad stairs.

"Time to go to sleep," warned Greta, as the baby passed with a chuckle into Molly's outstretched arms.

"I won't be long," responded Molly, "but Mr. Darrell wants to see him again. Don't you?" she demanded, sternly, of Darrell, waiting in patient resignation at the foot of the stairs.

"Delighted!" said Darrell, meekly; then, as, in her quick progress, she neared the stairs' end, "for heaven's sake, be careful!" A book had been laid on the steps—left there forgotten—and Molly's foot caught in it in her hasty descent. She made a struggle for her lost balance, but, with her arms full of laughing, wriggling baby, she failed to regain it, slipped again, and then fell forward with a little gasp, baby and all, into Darrell's athletic embrace. It was all over in a moment, the fright and the rescue; but the fall might have proved a serious matter, had he not been there to aid her.

"You're not hurt?" asked Darrell, anxiously. She had turned very white, and women, he knew, were fragile things. "Here, nurse, come and take the baby."

Molly willingly relinquished the startled Tommy to his still more startled nurse, and made her way in silence over to the fire.

"It might have killed him," she said, without answering him.

"But it didn't," said Darrell, with reassuring gentleness. "If you are as fit as he is—"

"Oh, I'm all right." Her indifference was plainly genuine. "How can I ever thank you?" She held out both hands in an impulsive gratitude as genuine as her indifference.

"How?" said Darrell, slowly. "Well, there's one way. I know it must seem awfully soon—but, after all, I've waited so many years, since that dance." And it seemed to him that he had really been waiting all that time, for this moment. "Won't you?" Darrell's voice was low and persuasive.

"I don't understand," said Molly, falteringly.

"Won't you care—don't you care? Can't I, too, have 'all this, and heaven besides'—with you? Say yes, Molly."

The fire flickered low; Molly hesitated—and was lost. "Why—if you really want it," she said.

"If I want it!" echoed Darrell.

The game was ended. This, he felt, was life.

Darrell was roused at an uncomfortably early hour on Monday; "one of the disadvantages of suburban life," Tom volunteered, cheerfully, as they entered the dim breakfast-room; but his cheer found small response in the ill-disguised gloom of Darrell's morning mood. They ate in haste, in spite of Anderson's reassuring "Ten minutes to spare," and Darrell looked out at the rain, drearily persistent as ever, and found himself suddenly homesick for the city, its crowded streets and its sloppy pavements.

Molly loitered in when the meal was nearly over. Another injury! Darrell found himself already itemizing her sins, chief of which was the fact that, since Tom had broken in upon that brief moment before the hall-fire, he had been unable, try as he would, to get any more time alone with Molly. He could not be sure that it was her fault; but he felt none the less aggrieved. A man did not bind himself to that sort of thing for the pleasure of talking to a crowd of people. Since he gave up a good deal, he expected a good deal in the way of—compensation, he had almost said, but return sounded better.

To go to bed aggrieved is a bad thing; one is likely to wake with the black dog conspicuously present; and the early rising and the hasty break-

fast in no way dispelled Darrell's ill-humor. So it was combatively, rather than affectionately, that he said good-bye to the inscrutable Molly, and it was a warning, rather than an imploring, "Don't forget," that he half-whispered as he struggled into his rain-coat. Then Tom called to him to hurry, and they were off with only an indefinite smile from Molly, and a shake of her head which might mean anything from a promise to a negation.

The train was crowded; the two men were separated, and Darrell was left to the companionship of his own gloom. So he had pledged himself to this! he grumbled, inwardly. No, by Jove! he'd not do it. They would live in the city, if they had to do it in a three-room flat. No catching trains for him! He found himself subconsciously meditating on ways and means—a thing which he had not often had to do, and one which he loathed correspondingly. He had always felt that he had enough money to marry; but he had mentally postulated that his wife should be of the sort who could "do without." Now, Molly was hardly of that variety, he fancied.

By the time they had reached the smoke of the tunnel, he was thoroughly out of conceit with Molly; by the time the ferry had bumped slowly into the slip on the New York side, he was wholly out of conceit with himself. The independence of his own office-boy, making a belated entrance, made him envious; he plunged into work to keep from thinking, and greeted a stray client with an effusion which he knew was thoroughly unbusinesslike. The hasty lunch at a restaurant, which had, on Saturday, seemed so repellent, filled his soul with an unspeakable content; the cigar smoke, the rush, the busy silence of the other men—all this was what he had pledged himself to dislike—and all for a girl who, to say the best, was unresponsive.

The day dragged its length through to dinner-time; he dined at the club with a man he had never liked, and even took him to the theatre to escape the wearisome monotony of his own

regret. Yet, all the time, he was bitterly conscious that he was a cad; that a man had no right to ask a nice girl to marry him unless he meant it; that, after all, it was not the girl, but matrimony, which was daunting him. Molly herself seemed, in the abstract, as attractive as ever; it was only as his wife, as a divider of his income, as a curtailer of his freedom, that she repelled him.

After all, he must abide by his bargain, he reflected, gloomily resigned, as he unlocked the door of his apartment. The lights were brightly burning, and the place was filled with the comfortable odor of a good cigar. Darrell made his way into the smoky dimness of the leather-upholstered room.

"Hello, Morton!" he said.

"Hello!" said Morton, without looking up. "Keep off those papers, will you?—it's copy."

"Why the deuce don't you put your confounded copy on the table," fumed Darrell; "I can't keep off it. And he planted an aggressive boot on the loose sheet of paper nearest him.

"Oh, well, walk on it, then," acquiesced Morton; "I don't care. What's the matter with you, anyway? What have you been doing with yourself?"

Darrell sank luxuriously into the depths of his favorite chair.

"Been making a fool of myself," he said, with conviction.

Morton stopped writing, and looked up questioningly.

"Oh, I haven't murdered any one!" Darrell's laugh was hollow. "I'm engaged, that's all. I'm open to congratulations."

"Humph!" said Morton, and resumed his writing.

"Is that all you've got to say, you unsympathetic beast?" Darrell was lighting his pipe with tender care.

"How'd it happen?" asked Morton, unenthusiastically.

"Happen? Why, the usual way, I suppose."

"Dance? conservatory?"

"Look here," said Darrell, firmly,

"she's all right. We won't have any mistake about that. It's only—well, I never was engaged before," he ended, ruefully.

Morton leaned back in his chair. "I've got it, you confounded sentimentalist," he said. "I went away. Parkins got beastly drunk; you went somewhere, and they made you comfortable. There was a pretty girl you'd known a while. Says you, 'Let's have this kind of thing forever'—gilt-edged luxury, wedding-present silver, and so on. Says she, 'Well—?' Then you struck New York again, and you don't like your bargain. It's up to you, that's all."

"Clever, aren't you?" said Darrell, with attempted sarcasm. Morton made no answer, and, after a minute or two of silence, Darrell rose and wandered over to his desk in the corner.

"What's this?" he said, abruptly, holding up an envelope.

"Letter," said Morton. "Came about eight, special delivery. I forgot to tell you. She must be rather fond of you," he added, with a discerning grin.

Darrell opened the letter nervously. He was not used to love-letters; he had never been that sort of a man; and he felt as though this were a box of gunpowder that might go off at any moment. He read it through hastily; then again, more slowly; finally he put it back carefully in its envelope, and tossed it at the oblivious Morton. The latter examined it carefully.

"What am I to do with it?" he demanded.

"Read it," said Darrell, briefly.

"Sure she'd like to have me read your love-letters?"

"Oh, she'd like that put in the paper," said Darrell.

"Well—" Morton's tone was dubious, but he opened the letter with alacrity.

"My dear Mr. Darrell," he began. "She doesn't seem over-affectionate. I thought they usually said 'light of my life.'"

"Oh, go on!" said Darrell, impatiently.

"Ever since that minute before the

fire'—So it was before the fire?—'I am sure we have both felt that what we said then was said on the impulse of the moment, and not as the result of any real feeling.' I judge," said Morton, parenthetically, "that there's a pair of you."

"Go on," said Darrell.

"I should dislike very much to feel that I had done you any actual wrong in answering you as I did; but I am sure that you were far from being in earnest—though I am sure you thought you were;—her English is a little poor," commented Morton, "but she means well; 'so I shall hope that this mistake on both our parts will only prove the foundation of a real friendship—something more valuable, I am sure, than a few weeks of sentimentality—' There, you see!"

"Oh, I see!" emphasized Darrell ruefully.

"—sentimentality—would have been for either of us. I am very glad that the affair went no further—I suppose," inquired Morton, "that she means she's glad *you* went no further?—and I am writing this in haste to relieve you from the embarrassment

under which I am sure you, as well as I myself, must be laboring.'

"Anderson's sister? Nice girl," said Morton, with conviction; "too good for you, Darrell."

"A lot too good," commented Darrell. "Still, it's a relief."

He read the letter over once more, then poked it deep into the coals of the open fire, and watched it blaze away to gray ashes.

"Well, there's an end of that," he said, at last; but his voice had a slightly dispirited ring, even to himself.

"I suppose you'll go out there again?" Morton's assertion was a query.

"Why—it's only decent, isn't it?" Darrell boggled a little. "She offers to be friendly, you know."

"Oh, you've got to. Yes," said Morton, thoughtfully, "it's still up to you. Well, good-bye, old man." He held out his hand, meaningly.

"Don't be an idiot," said Darrell, irritably. "Can't you see that this is the end of that sort of thing?"

Morton nodded. "The end," he said, "of the beginning. The beginning of the end."

ANYTHING WOULD DO

ETHEL—You were wrong in that quarrel with your husband.

MAUD—That doesn't matter. He has no idea what I was mad about.

JUST HELP HIMSELF

HE—If I tried to kiss you, would you call for help?

SHE—Would you need it?

SPRING-SONG OF THE MINSTREL

YOU who are to be my comrade
 Down the wide lane of the world,
 Spring is come, with greening banners
 On the soft south-wind unfurled!

Wander-life is wrought of wonders
 By the rhythmic breath of God;
 Though the way ahead is rugged,
 Like all ways that we have trod.

We had better leave our luggage;
 We shall only need a lyre;
 We shall robe ourselves in sunbeams,
 Warm us at the lyric fire.

Worldly wealth is very heavy,
 It would burden us, I fear;
 For our feet must chase the rainbow
 As it swerves from sphere to sphere.

Hasten, Love! The robin's calling,
 And the journey's not begun!
 I will join you on the highway
 At the rising of the sun.

ELSA BARKER.



JUST WHAT ONE WOULD EXPECT

SHE—Bessie married her puppy love, did she not?
 HE—Yes, and now she is leading him a dog's life.



THOSE BOSOM FRIENDS

STELLA—I feel he is the first man who has ever really understood me.
 BELLA—Ah! then he didn't propose!

THE WILES OF VENUS

By Edgar Saltus

“IF you were on the jury would you acquit Othello?”

The question was put to us recently by a pretty girl. When a girl is pretty she has fulfilled every duty in life. Anything further is a surfeit of sweets. This girl has hands like flowers and a mouth like flame. We throw that in, not because we think it sounds well, but because, in telling her so, we managed to change the subject. For it is, don't you think, a great mistake to talk to a pretty girl about anything else than herself. Of all subjects it is the only one that she really likes. Besides, in the presence of beauty, truth should be charming, or else withheld. Psychology is for fat women, and philosophy for the plain.

Hence, therefore, our twist to the topic. But it is very spacious. From behind it emerges every one of the wiles of Venus. They are delightful to contemplate. Among them is the ability furnished us to love and to hate. But perhaps even without Venus we should have had that. It is an instinct abundantly diffused. A cynic has noted that a pretty woman incites in a man his best manners and worst passions. Yet why worst? Othello is a case in point. His passions were all right, but his manners were dreadful.

That, though, is always the way with jealous people. They do not assassinate, nowadays at least, but they feel like it. The feeling obviously is not well-bred, besides not being hygienic. It is the predisposing cause of dyspepsia.

Jealousy upsets the—but, then, there are words that should be uttered only in prayer and consultation. Yet that

is what jealousy does. It lowers the tone of the system. Whereat the patients become rude and ill-tempered. There is no getting on with them. And there is one of the games of the goddess. Venus will take a man who is charming and a woman who is charming, and turn one into a brute and the other into a bore.

Why? Why, indeed! Because the manifestations of the divinity cause an intoxication, a form of inebriety known in the pathology of antiquity as the sacred sort, though one which then, as now, the majority would rather die of than go without. The majority, you know, is always so engagingly ingenuous.

Apropos whereto a philosopher who lived so long ago that he wrote in Latin, but whom we have never read—and probably could not, if we tried—and would not bother to, anyway—is reported to have stated that the intoxication is a thing which anybody can avoid. If the report be true, it shows how valuable philosophy is. For, don't you see, it does not depend on you to love or not to. Not Venus merely but predestination interferes. Yet then, what is love?

Love, according to Hesiod, is the architect of the universe. According to Bacon, it is the perturber of the world. Victor Hugo said it is to be two and yet but one. Balzac described it as the poetry of the senses.

Add that all up, and from the sum total deduce such knowledge as you may. You will then find yourself as wise as before. The definitions are agreeable, but not exact. Love does not coincide with any of them, nor yet

with any of the million other dear little things that poets have evolved. Love is a febrile complaint.

Love is a fever which causes the patient to regard everybody, no matter whom, and everything, no matter what, as subsidiary to a certain being. When patients do not present these symptoms they have no fever at all. A good test is the absence of jealousy.

Jealousy is the most primitive of emotions. It is the highest of compliments. It is also the one which is appreciated the least. For it is the thermometer of the affections. It mounts with the fever of love, and with that fever subsides. When patients cease to be jealous they are becoming convalescent, they are preparing to go—to the baths of Rhode Island, perhaps, or to the waters of Sioux Falls. They are cured.

Meanwhile, given the fever, and though it may be long or short, yet, so long as it lasts, however you try, you cannot find a febrifuge. It is one of the villainies of Venus that she has made even the party of the second part impotent to supply one. Derision, desertion, disdain, all these things and others, too, that party of the second part may abundantly apply, and they will not diminish the fever in the least, *que dis-je?*—what are we saying?—they may even increase it. They may indeed serve to make a man hate a lady to the death, but while the fever lasts never will they prevent him from loving her to distraction.

All things being equal, so it is with her. She may pray to see the brute dead at her feet, if only that she may plunge after him into eternity to bore him there still further.

By way of morality it is perhaps worth noting that, however vilely a party may treat a patient, such are the hallucinatory effects of the fever that the mere touch of the party's hand will represent to the patient emotions acuter than anything else the world can provide. The flesh, too, and the devil.

The patient may have the wish to leave the party, and with the wish may

come the strength; yet, granting both, while the fever lasts there will be lacking the power to forget. For it is one of the wiles of Venus to have so ordered love that in its facts do not count.

In love, the imagination is everything. A man may put the Rockies and, while he is at it, the Himalayas, between him and the lady, only to find that with distressing constancy she pervades his memory still. The one and only way to be rid of her is to dispossess her from her habitation in his mind. To vacate his thoughts of her, and make up to some one else. Or, as a physician recommended: "*Lascia la donna e studia la mathematica.*"

The device is old, but it is sound. It has a defect, however. If he see her again he is a goner. Here is an agreeable instance:

A man met and married an alarmingly attractive young person. She treated him like the dickens. Falling ill, he went and took the cure in Dakota. With the divorce which the cure provides he married another young person. Years passed. At a dinner, he found himself next to Number I. Opposite sat Number II. The latter kept an eye on both. Subsequently, as a result of the—may we call it espionage?—she also took a cure. Monsieur returned to my lady.

All of which goes to show what we started to prove, and also something else which we didn't. It shows that out of an old love you can make a new one, that you can make anything, even to complications, except friendship. But that which over and above anything else it triumphantly demonstrates is the truth of an old adage: *On revient toujours à ses premiers amours.*

There again is another of the wiles of Venus. Of all men, there is but one whom a woman can love. By the same token, of all women there is but one for whom a man can care. In looking for that woman he may have a series of deceptive experiments. The objects of his experiments will, as a rule, be of the same type. But one will be lacking in this, another in that, none will be

the ideal, to whom, meanwhile, he is so faithlessly faithful. For this inconstancy of his is really fidelity, rewarded at last, perhaps, by the appearance of the woman herself. When this occurs he is in luck—she, too, provided always and on condition that he also is the one for whom she is hunting.

And there, you see, is the deuce of it. It is a platitude that in every affair there is one that adores and one that accepts the adoration. Two minds with but a single thought, means, when you come to think of it, but half a thought apiece, and people so abundantly imaginative may, if you like, be perfect lovers, but they must also be perfect fools. Apart from them such is the inequality of love that it has given rise to an aphorism: *Pour être aimé n'aimez pas*.

Yet that we regard as highly cynical, though only perhaps because it is so delightfully true. Cynicism is the precipitate of any experiment in human nature, and the cynicism which recommends those who wish to be loved not to love, is justified by the fact that the only things any of us ever want are precisely the things we lack. For, don't you see, we are merely human beings, and it is the hallmark of human beings to want everything that is coming to them until they get it, when, just because they are human beings, they do not want it any more.

Mr. Monkshood, the Piccadilly Aristhenes, noted recently that we are all entitled to whatever is not taken away from us. There is the French aphorism in English epigram. Both show, or seem to, that if you have the love of another you can only hold on to it by not letting go your own. As long as you do not care the other will, but, the moment you do care, the other won't, unless, indeed, you have the wit to conceal your affection as you would a virtue.

For it is another of the gaities of the goddess to have so muddled things that lovers, however they try, cannot hit it off. Said Sully Prudhomme, "I dream of unions that endure forever." Already Venus had said, "I don't."

You may agree with the poet. But, Venus having the Hours for servants, the Graces for aids, Youth for messenger, Laughter for weapon and Beauty for decoy, where, in the scrimmage, are you?

Of course, you may say that that is all rubbish. But in any decent account of the gulleries of the goddess you will fail to find a single chronicle of lovers who have hit it off. As pages turn and faces emerge, always when they are not weeping, they are yawning. The spectacle would be pathetic were it not consolatory. It is always so nice, don't you think, to find that others are in the same box as yourself?

If you are not in it already, you will get there. Unless, indeed, you have been there before. When you are, it may occur to you to begin all over with somebody else. For it is another of the dodges of the divinity to make you feel that, because you could not hit it off with the dear departed, there is no reason why you should not have better luck next time.

Nor is there. It is even modish to try. Among our best people it is quite the thing to marry, divorce and marry again. But not oftener. Those who go down for the third time are regarded as forever lost. In smart life, twice is the accepted limit. There are even people who go so far as to say that once is enough. But that is a very advanced view.

There is, though, another still more so. Why not down Venus and throw her out entirely? The idea may seem fantastic, but it is the occasional charm of certain ideas that, beginning as fancies, they end as facts. Crime, for instance, was once regarded as the result of demoniac obsession from which, by exorcism, the sufferer could be freed. By contemporary science crime is regarded as a malady for which, in the advance of therapeutics, a prophylactic will be devised.

Like crime, love also is a malady. If the one be preventable, why not the other? Why not, indeed! Why should not science find a vaccine that would eliminate its follies and fevers?

Science is a klinker. At the pace it is going you may be quite sure that it will. In which case, when the vaccine comes—when it does—there will be an end to Aphrodite and her lures.

At Paphos, in her high place, it may be that the goddess will linger still. But elsewhere she would vanish, and the spell of her witcheries pass. There would be no more elopements, no more divorces, no more temptations, no more perjuries, nothing but the austere satisfaction of domestic life. In a little while conversation might become

humdrum, and the papers rather trite. But think of the deliverance! Existence would be so comfortable. Only on the bookshelf would the story of Love survive. And that story some Renan of a later age, pricking with the point of his pen, would declare charming and untrue.

See what science may effect! Meanwhile, and notwithstanding the placidities of vaccine, those in favor are invited to hold up their hands and declare whether they do not prefer the torments of Venus and her wiles.



IRAM'S ROSE

Iram is gone with all its Rose.—OMAR.

WHERE was Iram, who that one
Who has watched its garden growing?
Níshapúr or Babylon
Held its radiant rose a-blowing?

Plucked he not the Sultan's flower,
Amber-eyed and red of mouth,
Made it his for one ripe hour,
Warm and spice-winged from the South?

Haply caught all life, they two,
With that rose, and tossed it madly
In the sun, where never blew,
Nay, nor died, a flower so gladly!

Laughed and tossed it in their glass,
Drank and drained it, breath to breath;
Ere the dial's shade had passed,
They had sought the shade of death.

Lived and loved an hour, where blows
Some old garden by a river;
Gone is Iram—but its rose
Breathes perfume in song forever.

VIRGINIA WOODWARD CLOUD.



THEY who loan to the lords can afford to give to the poor.

BY A STRANGE ROAD

By Kate Jordan

(Mrs. F. M. Vermilye)

IF we are, as has been said, the food we eat and the thoughts we think, then I am the hapless result of cheap food at stained tables, and of envy, defiance, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness.

This writing is penance, of a sort. It will show me just what I have sunk to in having loved Jim, married him, and stayed with him even when I found out what he was—swindler, thief, and every sort of cheap rogue, but with a handsome face, and a voice that can pull at my heartstrings even yet.

Oh, I was so different once! Tucked away in a corner of my trunk there is a picture of myself at seventeen, taken in Dresden when my father was at the embassy there. But I cannot write of that time. That girl of seventeen must be counted among the dead; there must not be a drop of her blood in me, nor one of her radiant, pulsing hopes, and my lips must be shut against the prayers she used to say in the fresh, sweet mornings. This must be so, if I am to live at all—I, who am Jim's wife.

I've been looking in a mirror, taking stock of my good looks—a diversion which costs me nothing and always cheers me. It's a comfort to like yourself. My skin is very white; a novelist would liken it to a camellia. My mouth is sufficiently good and sufficiently red, and I have wholesome, small, white teeth. My eyes are brown—the soft color of sealskin. My hair has always a tangly, bad-boy look, and it's very red, naturally so, of the

most fashionable shade. Unlike most of the red hair going, my roots justify the ends.

To-morrow, I leave this boarding-house. They'll miss me here. The old widows with tired eyes and baggy throats have made a pet of me. I looked like some dear relative of every one of them. The young shop-girls with blowsy pompadours falling to their brows made a heroine of me. They admired me from the depths of their commonplaceness because they did not understand me, for they saw me buy books, violets and cigarettes when I needed shoes badly, and kept wearing into November a Summer hat with flowers that had been rained on. All the young salesmen and old insurance agents paid me attention in their various ways, though a little afraid of me. They couldn't understand how a woman whose husband was most of the time mysteriously absent, who was pretty, with piratical social views, who smoked, and used a powder-puff frankly, could yet freeze them for a presumption.

Dear friends of poverty, I gave you something to talk about. Nothing quite like me had ever happened in the boarding-house before. I was a bit of flotsam evolved by experiences you did not understand. You'll miss me until gradually my memory is put away with last Summer's fire and the one suicide of years ago. Had you known the truth about Jim, you'd have given a wide berth to Jim's wife, and prayed God to keep you from all such.

My last letter from Jim disturbs me;

it boils with a mysterious elation which can mean only what he calls "graft." I don't know yet just what I'm to do. I was never a working partner before in any of his schemes. However, a registered letter with seventy-five dollars in it, with instructions to buy a plain, pretty gown and hat, was a comfort that took some of the bitter edge from my anxiety. I love pretty clothes. I love filmy, hand-made, embroidered stuffs, the inimitable look of old lace, the soft touch of furs. There are people who put money to ugly uses, but, spent esthetically, what beauty it can bring into life! This makes me think that after my shopping I have my ticket to Stamford, and just forty-two cents.

I found Jim waiting for me at the Stamford station in a high, black cart. He was driving, and he was alone. Just here I must utter another apostrophe to the magic of good clothes. What they can do for a man! In his smart, gray tweed, his patent-leather shoes and immaculate linen, his black hair brushed flat and shining like satin, he was a most bewildering counterfeit of a gentleman.

He lifted his hat formally, and murmured, in the hearing of various lounging, straw-chewing hack-drivers:

"Miss Lestray, I believe?"—my new name.

He held the horses in, while I stepped up briskly and cleanly, quite as if it were not the first time in years I had entered such an equipage. After turning the horses most cleverly, he did not speak till we were well away from the station.

"Old girl," he said, his blue eyes sultry with excitement, "this is the biggest graft in years. I tell you, Rhoda, it's great."

"Where did you get all the money, Jim—what you sent me—and, and—these clothes of yours?" I stammered.

A crafty look peaked his face. He smiled at some memory.

"I had good luck in Chicago."

"Oh, Jim"—I clutched his arm—"anything dangerous?"

"Never you mind—and take your hand away. Can't be too careful."

"Was it gambling?"

"Call it gambling," said Jim, and smiled again.

"I can't think why you want me with you. Your letters were very veiled, Jim."

"Foxy," he said, with a cheap astuteness which made me at once mentally transpose him from his high seat behind these gleaming, quivering horses to a restful position with worn coat-sleeves upon a rum-smelling bar, where he belonged.

During the three-mile drive to Hawthornden, he talked and I listened. There was no merriment in that talk, no lightness. It was hard, careful, anxious. It meant everything to Jim. Summed up briefly, the facts were these:

Two years before, Jim had known a man in the Klondike who was a mystery. He had died in the wilds with Jim, and had been buried there, known only as Brown. Jim took his possessions. They had seemed nothing but a package of useless papers, letters and photographs. But, when, months after, he had returned to Dawson City, having failed in the gold regions, he set about studying what Brown had left. He discovered that the dead man was Peter Convery, the lost, stray sheep of a good English family, who had for years lived a rough life in the Australian bush. There he had known one Arthur Herrick, had been a good influence in Arthur Herrick's life, and, while drifting to despair himself, had given him new hope, new purpose and a fresh start. There were letters from Arthur's brother, thanking him for all he had done. At this point Jim's business interest began, for he found that this brother, John Herrick, instead of an Ishmael, was a man of fortune and forty years, living, with his sister of thirty-eight, near Stamford.

To them, Jim had come a fortnight before, with his best society manner, an English accent and his false credentials, as Peter Convery, their dead

brother's friend—for it was Jim's luck that Arthur was now safely out of the way.

To them, I was coming in the mixed rôle of consulting housekeeper and companion to Miss Herrick, having, at Jim's suggestion, answered her advertisement. My reference, nicely forged by Jim, was from a society woman conveniently traveling in the vague region called the Orient. Jim had stolen the monogrammed and crested paper on which it was written from samples in a stationer's shop.

And Jim's intent? To rob so cleverly that he would not be suspected. There were to be all the appearances of a burglary by persons unknown. My part, he informed me, was to locate valuables, notably Miss Herrick's jewels, as I would have intimate access everywhere. After that—Europe, and a brief splendor for Jim and me.

"What's the matter? You're shivering," he said, in conclusion.

"Must I do this?" I prayed.

"I need you," he said, coldly. "It's the first time I've asked you to help me. Your part was always easy—spending the dough."

"My part," I said, hotly, "was lying for you, hiding with you, almost starving with you. Now you ask me to do this. I can't."

"You must," said Jim. "What did I marry you for? To be preached at and cried over? If you don't do what I tell you, I'll make you smart for it."

Yet, even then, I did not hate him. I only thought miserably of all I'd done for him who could say such words to me. Some women are like that. They have something in their souls that winds around a man, once he belongs to them, which clings fast even when they look with empty eyes, as I do, on the fleshless skeleton of love, and to cut it is like bleeding to death.

There was silence between us as Hawthornden came into view. A contraction of the throat burned me—

it was so like the home I once had, before I'd met Jim, when life was sweet and I was innocent. It stood on the side of a hill, a gray, substantial house, splotted with green and yellow stains, flaming vines cloaking it, oriel windows in the jutting wings winking from the leaves. Smoke rose in a straight, bluish column into the windless, sparkling air. A lush content smiled from it. Here were stability, self-respect, prosperity, peace.

Out-at-elbow bohémienne as I was morally, soiled of soul, desperate, hard, these aroused the half-dead hunger for good in me. The child that I had been was knocking at my heart. It was as if on approaching that house I were coming again into a kingdom I had lost.

In a shaded path where we were hidden from the windows, Jim brought the horses up with a sharp pull. He looked at me with a belligerent anxiety.

"Get that die-away look off, for God's sake!" he said. "This isn't a funeral. Are you going to spoil everything?"

"I'll play my part when the moment comes."

The appealing look that always softened me spread like a mist over his eyes.

"Rhoda, this means everything. Don't mind my being grouchy. You see, I'm up against it. I'll give up this sort of business after this—I swear I will—but I must pull this off, or—" He gave a shrug of dismay and helplessness, and we drove on.

In a few moments, I, having greeted Miss Herrick, was following a servant to my room. When I was alone, I looked into the mirror at my white face until it grew hateful to me.

"You've come to it at last, Miss Lestray," I muttered to those frightened, sullen eyes. "I always knew you would. You are to be a thief;" I could see the face sicken at the word, but I said it clearly again—"thief!"

All went well later. No one suspected us. Jim and I played our rôles of new acquaintances very cleverly. Jim amazed me, and even gave me much cynical amusement. His perfect self-possession, the ease with which he wore his new character, the brilliancy of his lying were matters to dazzle. If one elects to be a liar, there is, no doubt, a pride in doing it well. Jim's lies were like bits of a dissecting map where every morsel, no matter how curiously shaped, found its complement. I could not help a certain decadent admiration for his accomplished scoundrelism.

As I sat apart, demure, speaking seldom, and then in a very sweet, murmuring voice which was intended to express humility and amiability, I studied my employers, who were soon to be our victims.

Miss Herrick is a born celibate, one of those "nice" women that instinctively shrink from the least flavor of sex in their calm, purling lives. If some magic could transform a shaded, well-dusted, prim, soft-echoing Methodist meeting-house into a woman, the result would be Miss Herrick.

Her brother is an amiable fish.

A friend is expected soon for the shooting—which is good in these well-wooded hills—one Captain Featherstone, Hugh by name, Irish by extraction, said to be most attractive, who won his title and an army commission for his work as a volunteer in the Philippines. Even the Fish and the Methodist Meeting-house grow warm when they speak of him.

Captain Hugh Featherstone—from the moment I heard the name I felt a nearness to it. Sometimes the name of a stranger possesses this ghost-like personality, and you find yourself adding lines, coloring, expression, until the name's owner becomes an entity fashioned by your fancy. Such preconceptions are seldom far wrong. There is a magnetic understanding not born of the five senses, a conclusion not found in logic. Women possess it oftener than men. As they talked of Captain Featherstone, I saw him.

Without really knowing it, I was waiting for him.

I haven't written in three weeks. Captain Featherstone seeks me constantly. I am most unhappy. I can't write more to-day.

I might have known in that first look that I was bound to love him. I see again the shaded hall, the light from the stained, oriel windows falling on his face, as I came toward him. I carried a small basket of flowers that I was going to arrange in bouquets all over the house. In my neat, black-silk gown I walked gravely. Miss Herrick presented me, casually, as one does a semi-inferior. His gray eyes with violet lights, the strength and tenderness in his smile, his fair, thick hair of the unruly, boyish sort, were all externals to attract generally. But there was something else. It was his look. A magnetism in it drew me to him like a call. Something in each of us gave rapturous recognition and greeting. I don't pretend to understand this mystery. Had I never seen him after that moment, I'd have remembered his face and smile to the end of a long life. I felt an eerie, troubling exultation that he was much as I had fashioned him, but with the warm, generous glow added that only blood and breath can give.

Jim has thought well to insist on leaving, as other guests are coming, but he is only going to a small boarding-house a half-mile away, and is to come occasionally to dinner. He fears being closely inspected by many people. The Methodist Meeting-house told me to-day she would never forget what he had done for her brother Arthur. A month ago, I could have laughed recklessly over this with Jim. It is different now.

I walked for miles along the crisscrossed roads early this morning. I seemed the only living thing in the still, dewy world. I prayed for the first time in years. A madness of grief has

overtaken me for what I have become. It would have been better if I had never come to this house. I was numb before where now I ache. Better to be the living dead than to know that, though you shudder and suffer, there is no turning back.

This afternoon I was in the garden with Captain Featherstone for an hour. The air tasted like well-water, the sky blazed in blueness, the blood-red and golden world trembled in ecstasy on the edge of a glorious decay. The nervous thrill of transition was in the air. It was so quiet that the note from a cow's bell in a pasture a good distance away could be heard. At intervals, a shot shattered the silence, as if invisible rockets were bursting in the upper sunlight.

I was steeped in a pervading sadness. Captain Featherstone, too, was silent. We were sitting side by side on a stone seat patterned with moss. When, after a vital pause, he lifted his book to show me a phrase he liked, my fingers touched his, and it was like the rushing together of our souls. We forgot the book. He took my hand with tender, passionate protection, and I listened to the saddest words of my life—the story of his ecstatic love for me, for me who could not take it because I am what I am!

Oh, God! great, unforgetting God, you have punished me! I am in the talons of an irremediable regret. I am exhausted. Youth seems retreating from me. I feel old, old.

Jim is growing very impatient. He realized that slow methods were necessary, but he is tiring of this calm, respectable life where there is "nothing doing." The sawdust of bar-rooms is in his blood.

Late the same night, I met him in that very garden. I know now that paradise can be as hell. It depends on what sort of angels we face there. He began by reproaching me for accomplishing nothing. I was silent. He asked for information, for suggestions for the furthering of his plans, and devised a scheme whereby

I was to get the necklace Miss Herrick seldom wore.

Oh, if years ago I had seen him with such informed eyes as looked on him then! For the first time, I saw clearly how his handsomeness went hand in hand with a featural contemptibleness. I measured his insignificant head, his lack of jaw, the wavering morsel of chin, the plausible mendicant that peeped out in his mean smile. His voice, of wonderful sweetness indeed, that I had thought once could almost call me from the grave, I estimated now as an accident, the result of certain vocal intricacies, no more an evidence of the man than the idyllic light he could summon to his dreamy, blue eyes was an evidence of the cold trickster leering behind them.

When he had finished his harangue, made up of commands and threats, with interjections of the cheap cajolery which had hitherto won me so easily, I spoke, very quietly:

"Jim, you are going to leave this place to-morrow."

"How can I?" he demanded, in anger; "I'm not a cent to the good by this job, thanks to you."

"You're not going to make anything by this job, Jim."

What he said would not be pleasant reading. He had a pretty taste in oaths, the gift of pictorial profanity.

"I'm sick of my life," I said, unmoved. "I'll not make it worse to bear. I'll not soil myself with work like this. Nothing can make me. I mean to leave here, too. But you must go first. I'll give you till to-morrow night to get away. If you don't, I'll tell them what you are, what we both are, and our business here."

He didn't believe me at first. When he did, he cursed me. My quiet mad-dened him, and he took me by the throat, shook me, flung me against a tree, and struck me twice in the face. When I came out of my stupor and pain, he had gone, and I realized that I had stumbled to the seat where I had sat that afternoon with Hugh.

"I love you," Hugh had said. "I want to make your life warm and sweet and sheltered."

I laughed in my misery, as I wiped my face.

The day following, at three o'clock, a farm-hand brought me a scrawl from Jim.

"I'm off by the four-twenty train. But don't you come after me. Do you hear? For good and all I've done with you. Understand."

I couldn't believe that he meant to go. This was probably a ruse to cheat me. Still, I had made secret preparations to leave, for the moments were becoming agonized.

The house was as quiet as a convent. The men were off shooting; Miss Herick was taking her afternoon nap. I stole to Hugh's room, took a mute farewell of the dear, familiar things he had touched, and stole a half-worn cravat for memory. I was hurrying out when I saw a small, very old Bible lying half open on a table. It fell back at my shrinking touch, and I saw a faded photograph of a sweet-faced old woman in cap and kerchief; she had Hugh's eyes. With it was the rose, still fresh, that I had given him yesterday. My rose with his mother's picture in his mother's Bible! And such a love had come to me, the stained, the beaten—Jim's wife! The tears that fell upon that inapposite trinity washed my heart clean.

The sound of shots alarmingly near the house startled me. The men must be returning. I hurried out, and half-way across the garden I came face to face with Hugh. Beside a stern grief that had marked him since yesterday, there was another look in his eyes as of shock and pain.

"Don't go that way!" he cried, and drew me into a Summer-house.

As he spoke, I looked beyond him, and between the trees I saw some men carrying something toward the stables. The something was covered by a blanket. Hugh pressed me into a rustic chair.

"It's not a sight for a woman. A

shocking thing has happened. You heard shots a moment ago?"

"Shots!" My lips did not sound the word. I knew. I saw Jim's dead face everywhere, in the sunlight, the trees, in the trellis of the arbor—scores of them, all dead, stiff, the eyes shut and sunken.

"That good-looking fellow we knew as Convery has just been shot by a detective. He was a burglar—outfit found in his room—wanted for something in Chicago—tracked him here. As he ran, he fired—they fired—he dropped. He meant to rob the Hericks, of course he did. Convery wasn't his name—Melcher—James Melcher."

He looked into my clammy face as I shuddered there. "It's upset you dreadfully."

Thank God! at last the faces began to melt away, smaller, smaller. I was aware that I was holding out my hands, piteously. Hugh took them, and pressed them, reassuringly.

"You're trembling. How frightened you are! No wonder. It's a ghastly, dirty business to have come so close to one."

Then came the temptation of my life, the impulse to be silent and let all my past go into the grave with Jim. As I sat thus, I felt suddenly a chilling separateness from my surroundings, a quiet like death's. Hugh's face was shrouded from me, and I was conscious of only myself and that one, ultimate moment. It was as vital as a spar spanning an unplumbed chasm; it meant everything or nothing; when it should have passed, I was to know that the garden of enchantment might be mine for the entering, or that I would deliberately, with honest eyes and breaking heart, have put up the bars to shut me out of it forever. The moment passed. My choice was made.

"Hugh," I said; and then I stopped. "Hugh, yesterday, when I told you I wasn't free, you didn't know—" I looked at him in anguish. "I'm free now, and yet I've lost you, lost you, because—" I began to sob in a weak, lax way. "I'm going to tell you the

truth. I could cheat you—I've cheated for such a long time—but I'll tell you, and then—you'll—never—never look at me that way again, and you'll never—touch my hands." I broke down, and fell against him, clinging to him even as I pushed him away, saying over and over:

"I was his wife! I was his wife!"

I've been ill for more than a week. This is the first day I've attended to my duties. After telling Hugh everything that day in the arbor, I felt as if I were dying. He helped me back to the house, and I remember his saying, clearly and rapidly:

"You don't know anything about this Chicago business? They can't connect you with it?"

"No. He went alone."

"Then don't let it be known you thought of leaving here secretly. They might suspect. Leave everything to me."

He took me to my room, removed my hat and gloves, tore up the letter I had left for Miss Herrick, even unpacked my trunk, I weeping weakly, and watching him. He sent for a doctor and nurse. They said I had a nervous something—I don't remember what. That was ten days ago. To-day, Miss Herrick told me all about Jim, as a piece of scandalous news. In her quiet, pitiless scourging of him, she ratified the meeting-house impression.

"Captain Featherstone is so Irish, so impulsive, so quixotic. He insisted on giving the fellow a quite usual burial, even paying for it." She

looked at the tears moving down my thin face, and said, in her bodiless voice, "You're emotional, too, aren't you?"

Hugh! God bless you, dear. Good-bye!

I'm writing these last lines in New York.

Pleading weakness and the need of rest among "my own people"—the rabble of a frayed boarding-house—I said good-bye at luncheon to the Herricks and to Hugh; I was to leave that afternoon. I couldn't read his face as I gave him my hand. He was very pale. His eyes did not meet mine, nor did he look at me fully as he held the door open for me.

"Oh, thank you," I muttered, brokenly, as I passed him, "thank you for all you've done for me."

How shall I write the rest?

In the train, I gave way. Desolation and heart-hunger fairly crushed me. I dropped my veil over my face, which felt damp and cold, and, with my head resting against the window, I closed my eyes. Some one sat down beside me—and it was Hugh! A hand took mine—Hugh's hand.

"You didn't think, dear, I'd let you go alone?" he said, and the look in his eyes was like the folding of his arms about me.

He has forgiven me.

He says I'm not wicked. He says it was because I "loved much" that I endured what I shrank from.

Oh, I always knew that, but that Hugh should say it lifts me to heaven!



JUST SO

LITTLE CLARENCE—Pa, the middle class——?

MR. CALLIPERS—Referring to people, I presume? Well, the middle class is the meddle class, which is one layer below the muddle class. There is no model class.

THE MISANTHROPE

HE neither joys nor grieves,
 But cavils and mistrusts;
 His hopes are like the wizened leaves,
 Swirled down the Autumn gusts.

He looks askance at Life,
 If so be Mirth lurk near;
 He has ill-humored Doubt to wife,
 And is the slave of Sneer.

He makes a mock of Love,
 And all that on her wait;
 Yet, howsoe'er desire may move,
 He cannot rise to Hate.

Crimes of a former birth
 Must wreak on him their spell,
 Else why, while yet upon this earth,
 Must he abide in hell?

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



A COMMON OCCURRENCE

SHE—Oh, he is so rude and awkward! How do you account for his getting in society?

HE—I understand that he slipped up on some money, and fell in, as it were.



UNINTENTIONALLY

"I HEAR Gabby's engagement is broken."

"Yes; he talked the girl out of it."



WHAT a pity some new-rich won't remember that money talks—and let it go at that!

HER HUSBAND'S CHOICE

“AND you will meet me at Smith & Draper's at four o'clock, dear?” said Mrs. Bland to her husband as she followed him from the breakfast-table into the hall.

“Oh, yes, I'll try to,” replied Bland, in the cheery tone a man is apt to assume when he is asked to go shopping with his wife.

“You know, dear, that I never take the least pleasure in a dress unless it pleases you, and that is why I want you to select my new gown for me. You have such an eye for color, and *such* good taste.”

Four o'clock found Bland and his wife at a dress-goods counter, and Mrs. Bland was saying to an attendant:

“I want something handsome and stylish for a gown. Now, what shall I get, Harry?”

“Why not a broadcloth? I always liked that cadet-blue broadcloth gown of yours.”

“I know, but I don't think I want another broadcloth, although they do wear splendidly.”

“Then why not try this novelty goods? This piece with the little dash of blue in it would be very becoming to you.”

“Do you think so? I don't just like it, and I am afraid that overshot of blue would wear off.”

“Here is another piece that——”

“Oh, mercy! I wouldn't have that if they gave it to me! It's a horrid tint of blue.”

“Well, now, I like this piece of covert cloth, and it has a lot of style to it.”

“Oh, somehow, I never liked those covert cloths.”

“Here is something handsome and novel.”

“But I don't like that rough-surface goods. It catches and holds dirt so dreadfully. No, I won't have that.”

“Well, here is a sort of an invisible plaid that would make up with good effect.”

“I don't think so. And I'm sure that plaids are not worn much. They don't trim well, and you know that dresses are trimmed a great deal now.”

“Why not get a handsome black dress? Nothing is more becoming to you than black. I like better to see you in black than in anything else, and here is a very handsome piece of black goods.”

“Why, Harry Bland! that is Henrietta cloth, and it isn't a bit fashionable any more. I'd as soon get a common black alpaca as that.”

“What's the matter with this goods? I like this.”

“Oh, that is a zibeline, and I never fancied that goods. I don't want that.”

“Well, now, here is something that just takes my eye.”

“It doesn't take mine. And, besides, that goods has been worn several seasons. Now, here is something I *do* like. Don't you?”

“To tell you the honest truth, I don't like it at all.”

“You don't? Well, now *I* like it, and it would make up ever so stylishly. And it would trim well.”

“Oh, well, get it if you like it.”

“Not if you don't like it. I want to dress to please my husband more than myself or any one else. And I—really, I like this better than anything we have

seen yet. But, of course, if you wouldn't be satisfied with it I—see what a soft, silky effect it has. Then it would harmonize with my new hat and—really, I like it very much.”

“Then get it.”

She got it, and the next day she said to her dressmaker, when that wily lady pronounced the dress pattern “just lovely”:

“My husband selected it for me. I always have him help me select my gowns. He has such good taste, and I take no pleasure in a dress unless he likes it.”

J. L. HARBOUR.



A SERIOUS OBJECTION

HELEN—Archie is of excellent family; and, besides, he neither drinks, smokes nor plays cards.

BLANCHE—Why don't you marry him?

HELEN—Oh, he is so set in his ways.



WHICH WAS FAR WORSE

WILLIAMSON—Does your wife always have the last word?

HENDERSON—Well, if she doesn't, old fellow, she looks it.



MEANS TO AN END—THAT'S ALL

IT is not necessary to get married. Just run in debt—it's much the same.



WILLIE—Auntie, are the angels homely?

WILLIE'S AUNT—Oh, no, Willie; they are beautiful beyond expression.

“Then how will I know you?”

VALENTINES

By Arthur Macy

I—FROM A BIBLIOPHILE

LYKE some choise booke thou arte toe mee,
Bound all so daintilie;
And 'neathe the covers faire
Are contents true and rare.
Ne wolde I looke,
Ne reade inne any other booke,
If I belyke could find therein the charte
And indice to thy hearte.
The Great Wise Authour made but one
Of this edition, then was don;
And were this onlie copie mine,
Then wolde I write therein, "My Valentyne."

II—FROM AN INCONSTANT-CONSTANT

(After Henri Murger)

Though I love many maidens fair
As fondly as a heart may dare,
Yet still are you the only one
True goddess of my pantheon.

And though my life is like a song,
Each maid a stanza, clear and strong,
Yet always I return again
To you who are the sweet refrain.

III—FROM A COMMERCIAL LOVER

If I were but a syndicate,
And love were merchandise,
I'd buy it at the market rate,
And hold it for a rise.

And should the price of all this love
Bound upward like a ball,
And reach 1,000 or above,
Still you should have it all.

THE SMART SET

IV—FROM AN UNCERTAIN MARKSMAN

I send you two kisses
 Wrapped up in a rhyme;
 From Love's warm abysses,
 I send you two kisses;
 If one of them misses,
 Please wait till next time,
 And I'll send you *three* kisses,
 Wrapped up in a rhyme.

V—FROM A CONCHOLOGIST

Were I a murmuring ocean shell
 Pressed close against your ear,
 My constant whisperings would tell
 A story sweet to hear.
 I'd make the message from the sea
 Love's tidings on the shore,
 And I would woo with words so true
 That you could ask no more.

So, if some silvern nautilus
 Lay close beside your cheek,
 And you should hear a language dear
 Unto the heart I seek,
 You'll know within the simple shell
 That murmurs o'er and o'er,
 I send to you a love more true
 Than e'er was breathed before.

VI—FROM A HYPERBOLIST

Take all the love that e'er was told
 Since first the world began,
 Increase it twenty thousand-fold
 (If mathematics can),
 Add all the love the world shall see
 Till Gabriel's final call,
 And, when compared with mine, 'twill be
 Infinitesimal.



A POLITIC HUBBY

“WHAT a simple, unsuspecting chap Damcare must be!”
 “Yes, very. But I suppose he's afraid if he were otherwise it would
 break up his happy home.”

MAMMON'S MATCH

By James Branch Cabell

“IT is very inconsiderate of you, Peter,” said Mr. Wyke, reproachfully, “very inconsiderate, and not at all what I should have expected of you. Moreover, it’s foolish. What good do you get out of having the gout, anyway?”

Whereupon, Peter Blagden desired to be informed if Mr. Wyke considered those with various-adjectives-accompanied twinges in that qualified foot to be a source of personal pleasure to the owner of the very-extensively-hiatused foot. In which case, Mr. Blagden felt at liberty to express his opinion of Mr. Wyke’s intellectual attainments, which was of an uncomplimentary nature.

“Because, you know,” Hunston Wyke pursued, equably, “you wouldn’t have the gout if you didn’t habitually over-eat yourself and drink more than is good for you. In consequence, here you are with a foot of the same general size and shape as a hay-rick, only rather less symmetrical, and quite unable to attend to the really serious business of life, which is to present me to the heiress. It is a case of vicarious punishment which strikes me as extremely unfair. You have made of your stomach a god, Peter, and I am the one to suffer for it. You have made of your stomach,” continued Mr. Wyke, venturing aspiringly into metaphor, “a brazen Moloch before which you are now calmly preparing to immolate my prospects in life. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Peter!”

Mr. Blagden’s next observation was describable as impolite.

“Fate, too,” Hunston Wyke la-

mented, in a tragic voice, “appears to have entered into this nefarious conspiracy against me. Here, not two miles away, is one of the greatest heiresses in America—clever, I am told, beautiful, I am sure, for I have yet to discover a woman who sees anything in the least attractive about her—and, above all, with the Woods millions at her disposal. Why, Peter, Margaret Hugonin is the woman I’ve been looking for these ten years—she is, to a hair, precisely the sort of woman I’ve always intended to make unhappy. And I can’t even get a sight of her! Here you are laid up with the gout, and unable to help me; and yonder is the heiress making a foolish pretense at mourning for the old curmudgeon who left her all that money, and declining to meet people. Oh, she’s a shiftless woman, Peter! At this very moment, she might be getting better acquainted with me; at this very moment, Peter, I might be explaining to her in what points she is utterly and entirely different from all the other women I’ve ever known. And she prefers to immure herself in Selwoode with no better company than her father, who’s an ungodly old retired colonel, and a she-cousin, who’s somewhere on the undiscussable side of forty—when she might be engaging me in amorous dalliance! That Miss Hugonin is a shiftless woman, I tell you! And Fate—oh, but Fate is a vixenish jade!” cried Mr. Wyke, and shook his fist under the nose of an imaginary arbitress of destiny.

“You appear,” said Peter, drily, “to be unusually well informed of what’s going on at Selwoode.”

"You flatter me," said Hunston Wyke, with proper modesty. "You must remember that there are maids at Selwoode. You must remember that my man, Byam, is—and will be until that inevitable day when he will attempt to blackmail me, and I shall kill him in the most lingering fashion I can think of—that Byam is, I say, something of a diplomatist."

Mr. Blagden regarded him with disapproval. "You're a damn' cad, you know, Hunston," he pensively observed. "You're the most unblushing fortune-hunter I ever knew. I can't, for the life of me, understand why I don't turn you out of doors."

"I don't know where you picked up your manners," said Mr. Wyke, reflectively, "but it must have been in devilish low company. I'd cut your acquaintance, Peter, if I could afford it." Then he fell to pacing up and down the floor, with a certain indolent grace. "I am, as you have somewhat grossly worded it, a fortune-hunter. And why the deuce shouldn't I be, Peter? A fortune's the only thing I need. I have good looks, you know, of a sort; ah, I'm not vain, but both my glass and a number of women have been kind enough to reassure me on that point. And that I have a fair amount of wits my creditors will attest, who have lived promise-crammed for the last decade, feeding upon air like chameleons. Then, I have birth—not that good birth ensures anything but bad habits, though, for you will observe that, by some curious freak of Nature, an old family tree seldom produces anything but wild oats. And, finally, I have position. I can introduce my wife into the very best society; ah, yes, you may depend upon it, Peter, she will have the privilege of meeting the very worst and stupidest and silliest people in the country on perfectly equal terms. You will perceive, then, that the one desirable thing I lack is wealth. And that I shall naturally expect my wife to furnish. So, that point is settled, and you may give me a cigarette."

Peter handed him his case, with a snort. "You're a conceited ass," Mr. Blagden was pleased to observe. "You ought to have learned, by this, that you'll never get a rich wife. God knows, you've angled for enough of 'em!"

"You are painfully coarse, Peter," Mr. Wyke pointed out, with a sigh. "Indeed, your general lack of refinement might easily lead one to think you owed your millions to your own thrifty industry, or some equally unpleasant attribute, rather than to your father's very commendable and lucrative innovation in the line of—I remember it was something extremely indigestible, but, for the moment, I forget whether it was steam-reapers or a new sort of pickle. Yes, in a great many respects, you are hopelessly parvenuish. This cigarette-case, for instance—studded with diamonds and engraved with a monogram big enough for a coach-door! Why, Peter, it simply reeks with the ostentation of honestly acquired wealth—and with very good tobacco, too, by the way. I shall take it, for I am going for a walk, and I haven't any of my own. And some day I shall pawn this jeweled abortion, Peter—pawn it for much fine gold, and upon the proceeds I shall make merriment for myself and for my friends." And Hunston Wyke pocketed the case.

"That's all very well," Peter growled, "but you needn't try to change the subject. You know you've angled after any number of rich women who've had sense enough, thank God, to refuse you. You're utterly good-for-nothing, Hunston."

"It is the one blemish," said Mr. Wyke, sweetly, "upon an otherwise perfect character. And it is true," he continued, after an interval of meditation, "that I have, in my time, encountered some very foolish women. There was, for instance, Elena Barry-Smith, who threw me over for Bob Townsend; and Gabrielle Ullweather, who had the bad taste to prefer Teddy Anstruther; and Anne Willoughby, who very inconsiderately married Jack

Charteris instead of me. These were very foolish women, Peter, but, while their taste is bad, their dinners are good, so I have remained upon the best of terms with 'em. They have trodden me under their feet, but I am the long worm that has no turning. Moreover, you are doubtless aware of the axiomatic equality between the fish in the sea and those out of it. I hope before long to better my position in life. I hope—ah, well, that would scarcely interest you. Good morning, Peter. And I trust, when I return," Mr. Wyke added, with chastening dignity, "that you will evince a somewhat more Christian spirit toward the world in general, and that your language will be rather less reminiscent of the blood-stained buccaneer of historical fiction."

"You're a grinning buffoon," said Peter. "You're a Jack-pudding. You're an ass. Where are you going, anyway?"

"I am going," said Mr. Wyke, "to the extreme end of Gridlington. Afterward, I am going to climb the wall that stands between Gridlington and Selwoode."

"And after that?" said Peter.

Hunston Wyke gave a gesture. "Why, after that," said he, "fortune will favor the brave. And I, Peter, am very, very brave."

II

A HALF-HOUR subsequently, Mr. Wyke, true to his word, was scaling a ten-foot stone wall thickly overgrown with ivy. At the top of it, he paused, and sat down to take breath and meditate, his legs dangling over into as flourishing an Italian garden as you would wish to see.

"Now, I wonder," Mr. Wyke queried, of his soul, "what will be next? There is a very cheerful uncertainty about what will be next. It may be a spring-gun, and it may be a bulldog, and it may be a susceptible heiress. But it's apt to be— No, it isn't," Mr. Wyke amended, promptly; "it's

going to be an angel. Or perhaps it's going to be a dream. She can't be real, you know—I'm probably just dreaming her. I'd be quite certain I was just dreaming her, if this wall were not quite so humpy and uncomfortable. For it stands to reason, I wouldn't be fool enough to dream such unsympathetic iron spikes as I'm sitting on."

"Perhaps you are not aware," hazarded a soprano voice, "that this is private property?"

"Why, no," said Mr. Wyke, very placidly; "on the contrary, I was just thinking it must be heaven. And I am tolerably certain," Hunston Wyke commented further, in his soul, "that you are one of the superior angels."

The girl lifted her brows. She sat upon a semicircular stone bench, some twenty feet from the wall, and had apparently been reading, for a book lay open in her lap. She now inspected Mr. Wyke with a sort of languid wonder in her eyes, that gentleman returning the scrutiny with unqualified approval in his.

And, in this, he had reason. The girl was eminently good to look upon.

So Hunston Wyke regarded her for a rather lengthy interval, considering, meanwhile, with an immeasurable content, how utterly and entirely impossible it would be to describe her subsequently to Peter. Clearly, it would be out of the question to trust to mere words, however choicely picked, for, upon inspection, there was a delightful ambiguity about every one of her features that defied any such idiotic attempt. Her eyes, for example, he noted with a faint thrill of surprise, just escaped being brown by virtue of an amber glow they had; what color, then, was he conscientiously to call them? And her hair he found a bewildering, though pleasing, mesh of shadow and sunlight, all made up of multitudinous gradations of color that seemed to vary with the light you chanced to see it in, through the whole gamut of bronze and chestnut and gold; and where, pray, in the bulkiest lexicon, in the very weightiest thesaurus,

was he to find the adjective that could be applied to hair like that without trenching on sacrilege?

And, in his appraisal, you may depend upon it that her lips were passed quickly over as a dangerous topic, and dismissed with the mental statement that they were red and not altogether unattractive. Whereas, her cheeks baffled him for a time—but always with a haunting sense of familiarity—till he had, at last, discovered that they reminded him of those little tatters of cloud that sometimes float about the setting sun—those irresolute wisps that cannot decide whether to be pink or white, and so waver through their tiny lives between the two colors.

To this effect, then, Mr. Wyke discoursed with his soul, what time he sat upon the wall-top and smiled and kicked his heels gently to and fro among the ivy. By-and-bye, though, the girl sighed.

"You're placing me in an extremely unpleasant position," she complained, wearily. "Would you mind returning to your sanatorium and allowing me to go on reading? I'm interested in my book, and I can't possibly go on in any comfort so long as you elect to perch up there like Humpty Dumpty, and grin like a dozen Cheshire cats."

"Now, that," spoke Mr. Wyke, in absent wise, "is but another instance of the widely prevalent desire to make me serve as scapegoat for the sins of humanity. I am being blamed now for sitting on top of this wall. One would think I wanted to sit here. One would actually think," Mr. Wyke cried, raising his eyes toward heaven, "that sitting on the very humpiest kind of iron spikes was my favorite form of recreation! In the interests of justice," he continued, falling into a somewhat milder tone, "I must ask you to place the blame where it rightfully belongs. The injuries now being inflicted upon my sensitive nature, and, incidentally, upon my not over-stocked wardrobe, I am willing to pass over. But the claims of justice are everywhere paramount. Miss Hugonin, and Miss Hugonin alone, is responsible for my pres-

ent emulation of Mahomet's coffin, and upon that point I am compelled to insist."

"May one suggest," she queried, gently, "that you are probably—mistaken?"

Hunston Wyke sketched a bow. "Recognizing your present point of view," said he, gallantly, "I thank you for the kindly euphemism. But may one allowably demonstrate the fallacy of this same point of view? I thank you; for silence, I am told, is proverbially equal to assent. I am, then, one Hunston Wyke, by birth a gentleman, by courtesy a lawyer, by inclination an idler, and by lucky chance a guest of the Mr. Peter Blagden, whose flourishing estate extends indefinitely yonder to the rear of my coat-tails. My hobby chances to be gardening. I am a connoisseur, an admirer, a devotee of gardens. It is, indeed, hereditary among the Wykes; a love for gardens runs in our family just as a love for gin runs in other families. It is with us an irresistible passion. The very founder of our family—one Adam, whom you may have heard of—was a gardener. Owing to the unfortunate loss of his position, the family since then has sunken somewhat in the world; but time and poverty alike have proved powerless against our horticultural tastes and botanical inclinations. And then," cried Hunston Wyke, with a flourish, "and then, what follows, logically?"

"Why, if you aren't more careful," she languidly made answer, "I am afraid that, owing to the laws of gravitation, a broken neck is what follows logically."

"You're a rogue," Mr. Wyke commented swiftly, in his soul, "and I like you all the better for it." Aloud, he stated: "What follows is that we can no more keep away from a creditable sort of garden than a moth can from a lighted candle. Consider, then, my position. Here am I on one side of the wall, and on the other, is one of the most celebrated examples of formal gardening in the whole country. Am I to blame if I succumb to the tempta-

tion? Surely not," Hunston Wyke argued, very earnestly; "for surely to any fair-minded person it will be at once apparent that I am brought to my present very uncomfortable position upon the points of these *very* humpy iron spikes by a simple combination of atavism and injustice—atavism, because hereditary inclination draws me irresistibly to the top of the wall, and injustice, because Miss Hugonin's perfectly unreasonable refusal to admit visitors prevents my coming any further. Surely, that is at once apparent?"

But now the girl yielded to his grave face, and broke into a clear, rippling carol of mirth. She laughed from the chest, this woman, laughed boyishly. And Hunston Wyke, perched in insecure discomfort on his wall, found time to rejoice that he had finally discovered that rarity of rarities, a woman who neither giggles nor cackles, but has found the happy mean between these two extremes, and knows how to laugh.

"I've heard of you, Mr. Wyke," she said, at last. "Oh, yes, I've heard a deal of you. And I remember now that I've never heard you were suspected of sanity."

"Common sense," Mr. Wyke informed her, from his pedestal, "is exclusively confined to that decorous class of people who never lose either their tempers or their umbrellas. Now, I haven't any temper to lose, and, so far, I have managed to avoid laying aside anything for a rainy day, so that it stands to reason I must possess uncommon sense."

"If that is the case," said the girl, "you will kindly come down from that wall and attempt to behave like a rational being."

He was down—as the phrase runs—in the twinkling of a bed-post. On which side of the wall, I leave you to guess.

"For I am sure," the girl continued, "that Margaret would not object in the least to your seeing the gardens, since they interest you so tremendously. I'm Avis Beechinor, you know—Miss Hugonin's cousin. So, if you like, we'll

consider that a proper introduction, Mr. Wyke, and I'll show you the gardens if—if you really care to see them."

Mr. Wyke's face, I must confess, had fallen slightly. Up to this moment, he hadn't a suspicion that it was not Miss Hugonin he was talking to; and he now reconsidered, with celerity, the information Byam had brought him from Selwoode.

"For, when I come to think of it," he reflected, "he simply said she was older than Miss Hugonin. I embroidered the tale so glibly for Peter's benefit that I was deceived by my own ornamentations. I had looked for cork-screw ringlets and a simper in Miss Hugonin's cousin—not an absolutely, supremely, inexpressibly unthinkable beauty like this!" Mr. Wyke cried, in his soul. "Older! Why, good Lord, Miss Hugonin must be an infant in arms!"

But his audible discourse was prefaced with an eloquent gesture. "If I'd care!" he said. "Haven't I told you I was a connoisseur in gardens? Why, simply look, Miss Beechinor!" he exhorted her, and threw out his hands in a large pose of admiration. "Simply regard those yew-hedges, and parterres, and grassy amphitheatres, and palisades, and statues, and cascades, and everything—everything that goes to make a formal garden the most delectable sight in the world! Simply feast your eyes upon those orderly clipped trees and the fantastic patterns those flowers are laid out in! Why, upon my word, it looks as if all four books of Euclid had suddenly burst into blossom! And you ask me if I'd care! Ah, it's very evident *you* aren't a connoisseur in gardens, Miss Beechinor!"

And he had started on his way into this one, when the girl stopped him.

"Isn't this yours?" she queried, in a rather curious voice. "You must have spilled it coming over the wall, Mr.—er—Wyke."

It was Peter's cigarette-case.

"Why, dear me, yes!" Hunston Wyke assented, affably. "Do you know, now, I'd have been tremen-

dously sorry to lose that? It's a—a sort of present—an unbirth-day present from a very dear friend."

She turned it over in her hand. "It's very handsome," she marveled. "Such—such a pretty monogram!"

"Eh?—oh, yes, yes!" said Mr. Wyke, easily. "P. B., you mean? That stands for Perfect Behavior, you see. My friend gave it to me because, he said, I was so good. And—oh, well, he added a few things to that—partial sort of a friend, you know—and, really—why, really, Miss Beechinor, it would embarrass me to tell you what he added," Hunston Wyke protested, and modestly waved the subject aside.

"And that," his meditations ran, "is the absolute truth. Peter did tell me I was good. And it really would embarrass me to tell her he added 'for-nothing.' So, this far, I have been a model of veracity."

Then he took the case—gaining thereby the bliss of momentary contact with a certain velvet-soft trifle that seemed, somehow, to set his own grosser hand a-tingle—and cried: "Now, Miss Beechinor, you must show me the pergola. I am excessively partial to pergolas, you know."

And, in his soul, he wondered savagely what a pergola was, and why on earth he had been fool enough to waste the last three days in bedeviling Peter, and how under the broad canopy of heaven he could ever have suffered from the delusion that he had seen a really adorable woman before to-day.

III

BUT, "She is entirely too adorable," Mr. Wyke reasoned with himself, some three-quarters of an hour later. "In fact, I regard it as positively inconsiderate in any impecunious young person to venture to upset me in the way she has done. Why, God bless my soul! my heart's pounding away inside me like a trip-hammer, and I'm absolutely light-headed with good-will and charity and benevolent intentions toward the entire universe! Oh, Avis,

Avis! you *know* you hadn't any right to put me in this insane state of mind!"

Mr. Wyke was, at this moment, retracing his steps toward the spot where he had climbed the wall between Gridlington and Selwoode, but he paused now to outline a reproachful gesture in the direction from which he came.

"What do you mean by having such a name?" he queried, sadly. "Avis! Why, it's the very soul of music, clear and sweet and insistent as a bird-call, an unforgettable lyric in four letters! It's just the sort of name a fellow can't possibly forget. Why couldn't you have been named Polly or Margaret or something commonplace like that, Avis—dear?" And this combination of words apparently appealing to Mr. Wyke's sense of euphony, he repeated it, again and again, each time rolling out the syllables with a more relishing gusto. "Avis dear! dear Avis! dear, dear Avis!" he experimented. "Why, each one's more hopelessly unforgettable than the other! Oh, Avis dear, why are you so absolutely and entirely unforgettable all around? *Why* do you ripple all your words together in that quaint fashion till it sounds like a brook discoursing? *Why* did you crinkle up your eyes when I told you that da—blessed flower was a *Calycanthus arithmeticus*? And *why* did you pout at me, Avis dear? A fellow can't forget things like that. And, oh, dear, dear Avis, if you only knew what nearly happened when you pouted!"

He had come to the wall by this, but again he paused to lament. "It's very inconsiderate," said Hunston Wyke, "very! She might at least have asked my permission, before upsetting all my plans in life. I had firmly intended to marry a rich woman, and now I'm about as capable of doing it as I am of scaling the heaven yonder and purloining one of the stars. I'm going to marry Avis Beechinor, if she'll have me; and, if she won't, I'm going to commit suicide and leave her a pathetic little note forgiving her in the most noble and wholesale

manner for irrevocably blighting a future so rich in promise. Yes, that's exactly what I'll do. And, if she'll have me"—and here he paused, with an intake of the breath, and for a single heart-beat considered that roseate chance—"good Lord, if she'll have me! Why, I wouldn't change places with the Pope of Rome or the Czar of all the Russias! Ah, no, not I! I prefer to go back to that dreadful poor-man's country, as they very idiotically call it, and drum up a flourishing law practice, and take a flat up Harlem way—yes, even one of those condensed flats, with a stunted drawing-room and an emaciated hall and pantomime furniture that turns into something else when you press the right spring—and be quite immeasurably, and insanely, and unreasonably, and unadulteratedly happy! Ah, Avis! dear, *dear* Avis!" Mr. Wyke pleaded to the bland morning-air, "please be accommodating and have me!"

Then Mr. Wyke started somewhat; for, on the bench where he had first seen her, he perceived a book lying open. It was the book she had been reading when he interrupted her, and he now picked it up with a sort of reverence. He regarded it as an extremely lucky book.

Subsequently, "Good Lord!" said Mr. Wyke.

For across the open pages—serving as a book-mark, according to a not infrequent shiftless feminine fashion—lay a handkerchief. It was a flimsy, inadequate little trifle fringed with a tiny scallopy black border, and, in one corner, the letters M. E. A. H., all askew, contorted themselves into any number of flourishes and irrelevant tendrils.

"Now, M. E. A. H.," Mr. Wyke reflected, "does not stand, by any stretch of the imagination, for Avis Beechinor. Whereas, it fits Margaret Elizabeth Anstruther Hugonin uncommonly well. I wonder, now——"

He wondered for a rather lengthy interval. Then he laughed, a little bitterly. "So Byam was right, after

all," said he. "And Peter was right, too. Oh, Hunston Wyke, Hunston Wyke, your reputation must truly be malodorous, when at your approach timid heiresses seek shelter under an alias! 'I've heard a deal of you, Mr. Wyke'—ah, yes, she'd heard. She knew I'd make love to her simply because she was wealthy. She knew the sort of man I was, and she defended herself. It—it's rather a nasty business, this coming face to face with what you've made of your life. It hurts. It shames—ah, dear God, yes! it shames."

I fancy the moneyed friends of Mr. Wyke—he hadn't any that weren't moneyed—would have been a trifle astonished to have come upon their buffoon just then. His face was not a jester's face, for all that he presently flung back his head and laughed.

"Eh, well!" said he; "I'll let no sordid considerations stand in the way of my happiness! I'll marry her, even though she's rich. You have begun the comedy, my lady, and I'll play it to the end. As there's a God in heaven, you're the woman I love, and you're the woman I'm going to marry!"

IV

"WELL?" said Peter.

"Well?" said Mr. Wyke, defiant.

"What's the latest quotation on heiresses?" Mr. Blagden demanded. "Was she cruel, my boy, or was she kind? Did she set the dog on you, or have you been thrashed by her father? I fancy both, for your present hilarity is suggestive of a gentleman attending his own funeral." And Peter laughed, unctuously, for his gout slumbered.

"His attempts at wit," Mr. Wyke reflectively confided to his wine-glass, "while doubtless amiably intended, are, to his well-wishers, painful. I dare say, though, he doesn't know it. We must, then, smile indulgently upon the elephantine gambols of what he is pleased to describe as his intellect."

"Now, that," Peter pointed out, "is not what I would term a courteous

method of discussing a man at his own table. You're damn' disagreeable this morning, Hunston. So I know, of course, that you've come another cropper in your fortune-hunting."

"Peter," said Mr. Wyke, in admiration, "your sagacity at times is almost human! I have spent a most enjoyable day, though," he continued, idly. "I have been communing with Nature, Peter. She is about her Spring cleaning in the woods yonder, and everywhere I have seen traces of her handiwork. I have seen the sky, which was washed over night, and the sun, which has evidently been freshly enameled. I have seen the new leaves as they swayed and whispered over your extensive domains, with the fret of Spring alert in every sap-cell. I have seen the little birds as they hopped among said leaves and commented upon the scarcity of worms. I have seen the buxom flowers as they curtisied and danced above your flowerbeds like a miniature comic-opera chorus. And besides that——"

"Yes?" said Peter, with a grin, "and besides that?"

"And besides that," said Mr. Wyke, firmly, "I have seen nothing."

V

THE next morning, Hunston Wyke discoursed with his soul, what time he sat upon the wall-top and smiled and kicked his heels gently to and fro among the ivy.

"For, in spite of appearances," Mr. Wyke debated with himself, "it is barely possible that the handkerchief was not hers. She may have borrowed it or got it by mistake, somehow. In that case, it is only reasonable to suppose that she will miss it, and ask me if I saw it; on the contrary, if the handkerchief is hers, she will naturally understand, when I return the book without it, that I have feloniously detained this airy gewgaw as a souvenir. And, in that case, she ought to be very much pleased and a bit embarrassed, and will preserve

upon the topic of handkerchiefs a maidenly silence. Do you know, Hunston Wyke, there is really the making of a very fine logician about you?"

Then Mr. Wyke consulted his watch, and subsequently gave a grimace. "It is also barely possible," said he, "that Margaret may not come at all. In which case—Margaret! Now, isn't that a sweet name? Isn't it the very sweetest name in the world? Now, really, you know, it's very queer her being named Margaret—extraordinarily queer—because Margaret has always been my favorite woman's name. I dare say, unbeknownst to myself, I'm a bit of a prophet."

But she did come. She was very much surprised to see him.

"You!" she said, with a gesture that was practically tantamount to disbelief. "Why, how extraordinary!"

"You rogue!" Mr. Wyke commented, internally; "you know it's the most natural thing in the world." Aloud, he stated: "Why, yes, I happened to notice you forgot your book yesterday, so I dropped in—or, to be more accurate, climbed up—to return it."

She reached for it. Their hands touched with the usual result to Mr. Wyke's pulses. Also, there were the customary manual tinglings.

"You are very kind," was her observation. Afterward, she opened the book, and turned over its pages expectantly, and flushed an attractive shade of pink, and said nothing.

And then, and not till then, Mr. Wyke's heart consented to resume its normal functions. And, then also, "These iron spikes—" said its owner.

"Yes?" she queried, innocently.

"—so humpy," he complained.

"Are they?" said she. "Why, then, how silly of you to continue to sit on them!"

The result of this comment was that they were both late for luncheon.

By a peculiar coincidence, at twelve o'clock the following day, Mr. Wyke happened to be sitting on the same

wall at the same spot. Peter said at luncheon it was a queer thing that some people never could manage to be on time for their meals.

I fancy we can all form a tolerably accurate idea of what took place during the next day or so.

It is scarcely necessary to retail their conversation. They gossiped of simple things. They talked very little; and, when they did talk, the most ambitiously conceived sentences were apt to result in nothing more prodigious than a wave of the hand, and a pause, and, not infrequently, a heightened complexion. Altogether, then, it was not oppressively wise or witty talk, but it was eminently satisfactory to its makers. As when, on the third morning, he wished to sit by her on the bench, and she declined to invite him to descend from the wall.

"On the whole," said she, "I prefer you where you are; like all picturesque ruins, you are most admirable at a little distance."

"Ruins!"—and, indeed, he was only thirty-four—"I am a comparatively young man."

As a concession, "You are tolerably well-preserved."

"I am not a new brand of marmalade."

"No, for that comes in glass jars; whereas, Mr. Wyke, I have heard, is most prominent in family ones."

"A pun, Miss Beechinor, is the base coinage of conversation, tendered only by the mentally dishonest."

"Besides, one can never have enough of marmalade."

"I trust they give you a sufficiency of it in the nursery?"

"Dear me, you've no idea how admirably that paternal tone sits upon you! You'd make an excellent father, Mr. Wyke. You really ought to adopt some one. I wish you'd adopt *me*, Mr. Wyke."

Mr. Wyke said he had other plans for her. Discreetly, she forebore to ask what they were.

"Avis——"

"You must not call me that."

"Why not? It's your name, isn't it?"

"Yes—to my friends."

"Aren't we friends—Avis?"

"We—we haven't known each other long enough, Mr. Wyke."

"Oh, what's the difference? We're going to be friends, aren't we—Avis?"

"I—why, I'm sure I don't know."

"What a color you have, Avis! Well—I know. And I can inform you, quite confidentially, Avis, that we are not going to be—friends. We're going to be——"

"We're going to be late for luncheon," said she, in haste. "Good morning, Mr. Wyke."

Yet, the very next day, paradoxically enough, she told him:

"I shall always think of you as a very, very dear friend. But it is quite impossible we should ever be anything else."

"And why, Avis?"

"Because——"

"That"—after a pause—"strikes me as rather a poor reason. So, suppose we say November?"

Another pause.

"Well, Avis?"

"Dear me, aren't those roses pretty? I wish you'd get me one, Mr. Wyke."

"Avis, we are not discussing roses."

"Well, they *are* pretty."

"Avis!"—reproachfully.

Still another pause.

"I—I hardly know."

"Avis!"—with disappointment.

"I—I believe——"

"Avis!"—very tenderly.

"I—I almost think so—and the horrid man looks as if he thought so, too!"

There was an interval, during which the girl made a complete and careful survey of her shoes.

Then, "You must give me until tomorrow, Mr. Wyke," and a sudden flutter of skirts.

Hunston Wyke returned to Gridlington treading on air.

For he was, by this time, as thoroughly in love as Amadis of Gaul or Aucassin of Beaucaire or any other hero of romance you may elect to mention.

Some two weeks earlier, he would have scoffed at the notion of such a thing coming to pass; and he would have demonstrated, too, reasonably enough, that it was impossible for Hunston Wyke, with his keen knowledge of the world and of the innumerable vanities and whims of woman-kind, ever to go the way of all flesh. But the problem, like the puzzle of the Eleatic philosophers, had solved itself. "Achilles cannot catch the tortoise"—but he does. It was impossible for Hunston Wyke to fall in love—but he had done so.

And it pricked his conscience, too, that the girl should not know he was aware of her identity. But she had chosen to play the comedy to the end, and Mr. Wyke, in common with the greater part of trousered humanity, had, after all, no insuperable objection to a rich wife; though, to do him justice, he rarely thought of her as Margaret Hugonin, the heiress, but considered her, in a far more comprehensive fashion, as perhaps the one woman in the universe whose perfections triumphantly over-peered the skyiest heights of preciosity.

VI

THEY met, then, in the clear May morning, with what occult trepidations I may not say. You may depend upon it, though, they had their emotions.

And about them, Spring was marshaling her pageant, and from divers nooks, the weather-stained nymphs and fauns stared at them with candid, considerate gaze; and above them, the clipped ilex-trees whispered knowingly. As for the birds, they twittered to one another with point; for, more favored of chance than imperial Solomon, they have been the confidants in any number of such affairs, and regard the way of a man with a maid as one of the simplest matters in the world.

"Mystery!" they shrilled. "Pouf! See how they meet, see how they greet! Ah, sweet, sweet, sweet, to

meet in the Spring!" And that these two would immediately set to nest-building, they considered a foregone conclusion.

Hunston Wyke took both her firm, warm hands in salutation, and held them, for a breathing-space, clasped between his own. And his hands seemed to him two very gross and hulking, raw, red monstrosities, in contrast with their dimpled captives, and appeared, also, to shake unnecessarily.

"Now, in a moment," said he, "I am going to ask you something very important. But, first, I've a confession to make."

And her glad, shamed eyes mocked him. "My lord of Burleigh!" she softly breathed. "My liege Cophetua! My king Cophetua! And did you think, then, I was blind?"

"Eh?" said Hunston Wyke.

"As if I hadn't from the first!" the girl pouted; "as if I hadn't known from the very first day when you dropped your cigarette-case! Ah, I'd heard of you before, Peter!—Peter, the misogynist, who, after all these years of railing against women, was ashamed to go a-wooing in his proper guise! Were you afraid I'd marry you for your money, Peter?—poor, timid Peter! But, oh, Peter, Peter, what possessed you to take the name of that notorious Hunston Wyke?" she demanded, with uplifted forefinger. "Couldn't you think of a better one, Peter?—of a more respectable one, Peter?"

In answer, Mr. Wyke made an inarticulate sound.

"But you were so grave about it," the girl went on, happily, "that I almost thought you were telling the truth, Peter. Then my maid told me—I—I mean she happened to mention casually that Mr. Wyke's valet had described his master to her as a young man and an extraordinarily handsome young man. So, then, of course, I knew you were Peter Blagden."

"I perceive," said Hunston Wyke, reflectively, "that Byam has been somewhat too zealous. I begin to sus-

pect, also, that kitchen gossip is a mischancy petard, and rather more than apt to hoist the engineer who employs it. So, you thought I was Peter Blagden—the rich Peter Blagden? Ah, yes!”

Now the birds were caroling on a wager. “Ah, sweet! what is sweeter?” they sang. “Ah, sweet, sweet, sweet, to meet in the Spring.”

But the girl gave a wordless cry at the change in Hunston Wyke's face.

“Because I happen to be Hunston Wyke—the notorious Hunston Wyke,” he continued, with a wry smile. “I—I am sorry you were deceived by the case. I remember now; I borrowed it from Peter. What I meant to confess was that I've known all along you were Margaret Hugonin.”

“But I'm not,” the girl said, in bewilderment. “Why—why, I told you I was Avis Beechinor.”

“This handkerchief?” he queried, and took it from his pocket. He carried it next to his heart, did this cynical Hunston Wyke.

“Oh—!” And now the tension broke, and her voice leapt an octave to high, shrill, hysterical speech. “I'm Avis Beechinor. I'm a poor relation, a penniless cousin, a dependent, a hanger-on, do you understand? And you—ah, how—how funny! Why, Margaret always gives me her cast-off finery, the scraps, the remnants, the clothes she's tired of, the misfit things—so that she won't be ashamed of me, so that I may be fairly presentable to the world. She gave me eight of those handkerchiefs. I meant to pick the monograms out with a needle, you understand, because I haven't any money to buy handkerchiefs for myself. Ah, I remember now—she gave them to me on that—that first day, and I hadn't time to fix that one. Ah, how—how funny!” she cried, again, with a tense, pitiful shiver; “ah, how very, very funny! No, Mr. Wyke, I'm not an heiress—I'm a pauper, a poor relation. Ah, no, you've failed again in your fortune-hunting, Mr. Wyke! I—I wish you better luck the next time.”

He raised his hand as though to

ward off a physical blow. “Don't!” he said, hoarsely.

And all the woman in her leapt to defend him from this vital shame. “Ah, no! ah, no!” she pleaded, and her hands fell caressingly upon his shoulder; and she raised a penitent, tear-stained face toward his; “ah, no, forgive me! I didn't mean that. It's different with a man. Of course, you must marry sensibly—of course, you must, Mr. Wyke. It's I who am to blame—why, of course, it's only I who am to blame. I've encouraged you, I know. I came back that second day because I thought you were the rich Mr. Blagden, you understand. I was so tired of being poor, so tired of being dependent, that it simply seemed to me I couldn't stand it for a moment longer. Ah, I tell you, I was tired, tired, tired! I was tired and sick and worn out with it all! Ah, Mr. Wyke, you don't know what it means to a girl to be poor!—you can't ever know because you're only a man. My mother—ah, you don't know the life I've led! You don't know how I've been hawked about, and set up for inspection by the men who could pay my price, and made to show off my little accomplishments for them, and put through my paces before them like any horse in the market! We're poor, Mr. Wyke—we're bleakly, hopelessly poor. We're only hangers-on, you see. And ever since I can remember, she has been telling me I must make a rich marriage—must make a rich marriage—must—” And the girl's voice trailed off into silence, and her eyes closed for a moment, and she swayed a little on her feet, so that Hunston Wyke caught her by both arms.

But, presently, she opened her eyes, with a wearied sigh, and presently the two fortune-hunters stared each other in the face, piteously.

“Ah, sweet! what is sweeter?” sang the birds. “Can you see, can you see, can you see? It is sweet, sweet, sweet!” They were very gay over it, were the birds.

After a little, though, Hunston Wyke opened his lips, and moistened them

two or three times before he spoke. "Yes," said he, very quietly, "I think I understand. We've both been hangers-on. But that, somehow, seems to me a long time ago. Yes, I've been a fortune-hunter all my life. But I think that I loved you from the first moment I saw you. Will you marry me, Avis?"

Oh, the wonderful, tender change in her face! "You care for me—just me?" she breathed.

"Just you," he answered, gravely.

And he saw the faint start, the faint shiver that shook her body as she leaned toward him a little, in surrender; but, quickly, she laughed.

"That was very gentlemanly in you," she said, "but, of course, I understand. Let us part friends, then, Hunston. Even if—if you really cared, we couldn't marry. We're too poor."

"Too poor!" he scoffed—and his voice was joyous, ineffably joyous, for he knew now that it was he she loved and not Peter Blagden's money: "too poor, Avis! I am a rich man, I tell you, for I have your love. We've made a sad mess of the past, Avis, but the future remains to us. We're the earthen pots, you and I, who wanted to swim with the brazen ones. They haven't quite crushed us, these big, stupid, brazen pots, but they've shown us the danger. And, now, we're going back where we belong—to the poor man's country, Avis—to the country of those God-fearing, sober, honest folk who earn their own bread. You'll come with me, won't you, dear? You won't have quite so many gowns there, Avis, but you'll have love, and you'll have happiness, and, best of all, Avis, you'll give a certain very undeserving man his chance—his one chance—to lead a man's life. Are you going to deny him that chance, Avis?"

Her gaze read him through and through; and he bore himself a bit proudly under it; within himself, he gave thanks to God that his heart was all filled with love of her, and that the new-born manhood in Hunston Wyke could meet her eyes unflinchingly.

"It isn't sensible," she wavered.

How he laughed at that! "Sensible! If there is one thing more absurd than another in this very absurd world, it is common sense. Be sensible and you will be miserable, Avis, not to mention being disliked. Sensible! Why, of course, it isn't sensible. It's stark, rank, staring idiocy, isn't it, to think of chucking the brass-pot world?—this pompous brass-pot world that has never done anything for us, so far as I know, but make us envious and worried and discontented, and that is, between ourselves, as boresome a place as was ever invented. Why, it's the act of a raving maniac to chuck all that misery and get nothing in return but happiness. Of course it is, Avis. What will Mrs. Grundy say to it? what will she say, indeed? Avis, just between you and me, I don't care a double-blank domino what Mrs. Grundy says. Will you marry me, Avis?"

She gave him her hand frankly, as a man might have done. "Yes, Hunston," said Miss Beechinor, "and, God helping us, we'll make something better of the future than we have of the past."

In the silence that fell, one might hear the birds. "Sweet, sweet, sweet!" they twittered. "Can you see, can you see, can you see? Their lips meet. It is sweet, sweet, sweet!"

VII

BUT, by-and-bye, she questioned him. "Are you sure—quite sure," she queried, wistfully, "that you wouldn't rather have me Margaret Hugonin, the heiress?"

Mr. Wyke raised a deprecatory hand. "Avis!" he reproached her; "Avis, Avis, how little you know me! That was the solitary fly in the amber—that I thought I was to marry a woman named Margaret. For I am something of a connoisseur in nomenclature, and Margaret has always—*always*—been my pet detestation in the way of names."

THE BALLAD OF THE DÉBUTANTE

By Gelett Burgess

“**N**OW bring me my stunningest, swellest gown,”
Said the bud to her maid, Louise,
“For I’ll dance with the loveliest man in town,
And I’ll bring him unto his knees!
That blue silk frock, with my tresses brown,
Is a garb that will surely please.”

They have brought her a silken gown of blue,
They have buttoned her up behind,
With many a squirm, and a writhe or two,
And an “Ouch!” and a “Never mind!”
Till her mirror has given a finished view
Of a maiden unresigned.

“I’ll look like a fright,” said the scowling belle,
“And I never did like this thing!
Quick! bring me another, more smart, more swell,
If there is a dress to bring;
That Point d’Esprit should become me well,
And should earn me a diamond ring!”

They have brought her her delicate Point d’Esprit,
They have fastened the hooks and eyes,
They have pinned and patted till clad is she,
And painted, up to her eyes;
But her face is a ludicrous sight to see
As she tearfully moans and sighs.

“It will never do!” says the débutante;
“It is soiled, and it doesn’t fit!
And wear this garment I won’t and sha’n’t,
For I look like a country chit;
My little white organdie frock! . . . Why *can’t*
You hurry and fetch me it?”

The little white organdie’s laced at last,
With a chorus of “Ah’s!” and “Oh’s!”
Her face is powdered, her hair is massed
In a pompadour, over her nose;
And her hopes are high, and her heart beats fast,
As off to the dance she goes.

THE SMART SET

Now, her little maid has an evening free,
 With no one to say her nay,
 With her lover—a plumber's man is he,
 And he earns his five per day.
 And the maiden the plumber's wife would be,
 So she's laying her plans alway.

She has slipped her down to the dining-room,
 She has stolen some good cigars;
 She has entered the pantry's ghostly gloom,
 Where the apricots stand in jars;
 She has opened a bottle of beer—for whom?
 Let somebody thank his stars!

And now in the kitchen below, so gay,
 Are the maid and that plumber caged,
 Till the bud comes back, at the break of day,
 In a state of mind enraged;
 For the lady's maid, she is *fiancée*,
 And the *débutante* unengaged!



BESSIE'S REPLY

LITTLE FREDDIE—Did your papa make his money before you were born?
 LITTLE BESSIE—He married my mama for her money before I was born.



BOTH SERIOUS

AUNT GRIMM (*in an admonitory tone*)—Getting married is a v-e-r-y serious matter!
 NIECE HETTY—Yes, but staying single is a great deal more serious.



HER PLACE

“HOW old is she?”
 “I do not know how many years she has seen, but she is in her second gigglehood.”

THE DIVVIL-WAGON

A TALE OF LOVE

By Ernest Jarrold

THE Beaumonts had gone to the old-fashioned Colonial town of Kingston, nestling at the feet of the Catskills, for the Summer, and had taken Mary Ellen Ryan, the female Savarin, with them, to do the cooking. Her lover, Roger Haley, was the head-waiter at Martin's, twelve miles away, on the Saugerties road, and her brother, Michael, was a hostler at the Red House, half-way between Kingston and Martin's.

At the time our story opens, Mary Ellen was lying in a cot in the Kingston hospital, with a dislocated hip, two black eyes, and with three teeth in her stomach, where they had been forced by the "divvil-wagon," as she told her sympathizing friend, Alice Reagan, who sat beside the cot. Mary Ellen was wrapped to the chin in bandages and lint.

"What happened you, Mary Ellen?" said Alice. "Did a locomotive hit you?"

"'Tis all on account of the dinky little Frinchman, Gaston, that drives the divvil-wagon," said the sufferer.

"Oh, no, you mean Mr. Beaumont's chiffonneer, me darlint," said Alice. "And how did he do it, wid an axe or a hammer? Oh, but you're a beauty!"

"Yes," said Mary Ellen, sadly; "but me beauty's gone."

"Well, I wouldn't mind that, if I were you, Mary Ellen. Nobody knows you had it but yourself."

"You wouldn't say that if I were on me feet, and a poker in me hand."

"'Tis a small matter annyhow," said Alice, soothingly. "Go on wid your story."

"'Twas all on account o' me foolishness," resumed Mary Ellen. "I smiled at Gaston, he was such a dinky little chap, and he wore shiny leather shoes, and a clean collar every day. He brought me bokays and candies, and told me that me two eyes looked like star-rs in a lake."

"They look like two holes in an ironing-blanket now," said Alice. "But why did he hit you?"

"Sure, he didn't hit me; 'twas the feather-bed hit me."

"The feather-bed! This is the first time I ever heard of a feather-bed givin' a woman two black eyes," said Alice.

"You'd hear more if you'd say less," said Mary Ellen, irritably. "Is it you was in the divvil-wagon, or is it me? Gimme some o' that lemonade; me throat is like the inside of a stovepipe."

After a pint of lemonade had rippled over her palate, Mary Ellen resumed:

"'Twas the day behind yesterday, Alice. The masther and the mistress and the babby were out, whin who should drive up to the gate but me bold bucko Gaston, in Mr. Beaumont's new divvil-wagon, Satan, painted red as fire, and wid cushions on the seats like they have in church. I was afeerd to go at first, bekase the character of the baste was bad—havin' killed three cows and two goats—but Gaston made it run around like lard on a hot fryin'-pan, and at last I got in. I had on me more anteenk that the mistress gave me, Alice, wid bokay wather on it that I bought from a peddler last week, and me Easter hat, and Gaston says, 'We tak' ze spin by ze Red House, for ze lemonade and ze ice-cream,' he says.

You know how thim frog-eaters talk, Alice, and away we wint, wid the wind from the mountains on our two faces, and the finces flyin' by. They were all takin' our dust that day."

"Did Gaston say annything tinder-like?" said Alice, anxious for a morsel of gossip to retail.

"Not at that time, Alice," replied the sufferer. "He was too busy wid the machine. Well, as I was sayin', we were goin' along like slidin' on banana-skins. Gaston had hold of the throlley-bar that makes the machine go fast or slow, and I was steerin' wid the rudder-wheel, and Gaston had an arm around me waist, for fear I'd fall overboard, whin the handle of the throlley-bar broke off in his hand! If you'll believe me, Alice darlint, there we were, goin' thirty miles an hour, and we couldn't stop the baste. Gaston was white as the wall, and I gaspin' wid the great fear at me heart. Me hat flew off, and me hair was streamin' out behind like a thousand tails to a kite, and when we wint past the Red House, I was standin' up, yellin' to me brother, 'Save me, Mike! Save me!' Sure, Alice, I thought me time had come, and I thought of all the wicked things I had done, like givin' you sugar and claret from the misthress's pantry, and me wid one hand on the little steerin'-wheel, keepin' the snortin' baste in the road, and the other hand feelin' for the rosary in me breast."

"And where was the little Frinchman?" said Alice, who never lost sight of the love motive.

"Oh, he was hangin' around me waist, lookin' up in me face, and sayin' we'd die together, and be buried in the same grave."

"And a stone over you sayin', 'Even death couldn't tear them apart,' for Roger Haley to read of a Sunda' afternoon," said Alice.

"Arrah, don't bullyrag me, Alice," replied Mary Ellen. "Twas not death I was afeerd of, but what Roger would say whin he saw me goin' by Martin's in the divvil-wagon, wid that Frinchman hangin' from me waist, and

Roger wid an arm on him like a mule's leg. But I was sorry for the little Frinchman, Alice, till he tried to kiss me. 'Oh, my Hello Ease! Hello Ease!' he says. 'One leetle kees! Ze first, ze last! Ze kees terryble! Ze kees *lah mort!*' You see, he was crazy wid fear, Alice. Who was this Hello Ease, at all?"

"Yes," said the cynical Alice, "many a man gets crazy spells like that, and not in runaway divvil-wagons, either. Did you give Gaston the kiss?"

"It's queer about that," said Mary Ellen, thoughtfully. "I put me face down to comfort him, Alice, he bein' on the edge o' death, whin the wagon struck somethin', and I went up in the air, and came down on the broad o' me back in the middle of a feather-bed."

"Oh, ho! that's where the feather-bed was, is it! In the middle of the Saugerties road, of a Summer's afternoon?"

"You ought to file your tongue, to take the rasp off it," said Mary Ellen, angrily. "Wait till I tell you how the feather-bed came to be there. Whin Mike saw me goin' by the Red House like an Irish comet, he telephoned to Roger, at Martin's, to stop the runaway, bekase I was in the wagon wid a crazy Frinchman. Roger had only about six minutes to do the work, but everybody in the hotel helped him, and in two shakes of a goat's tail they had twenty feather-beds in the road, makin' one big bed seventy feet long and twelve feet wide; then they put two bales of hay in front of the big bed, and when Satan struck them, he went up in the air, and I lost me seven small senses for half an hour; and—would you believe it, Alice?—the little Frinchman wasn't hurted a bit, not a scratch on him!"

"Where is he now?" said Alice.

"Oh, he's in the hospital, poor man."

"And what is he in there for, if he wasn't hurted?"

"I'm sorry to tell you, Alice; but he had a little argyment wid Roger. I think it is concussion the doctors say is the matter wid him."

“WHERE LAY A MIST”

By Montagu Lessing

A SILVER mist lay on the land,
And it lay upon the sea—
A mourning veil from God's own hand
Down dropped of mystery.

The Lady Myrta paced the path,
Which clomb the cliffs among;
She heard the surges' shriek of wrath,
Their dread and awful song.

“Why sing the waves so sad?” quoth she;
“Why lies the mist so drear?
The song is as a dirge to me;
My heart is fain with fear.

“Oh, is it sin to love?—ah, woe!—
To love, oh, is it sin,
Though when one strives to bid it go,
It still should enter in?

“For he, my lord, is sad and old,
With beard and hair all white;
His palsied hands are clawed and cold,
His eyes have quenched their light.

“And Loren is so fair, so young,
And his the lover's art;
The burning words that he has sung
Are flame within my heart.

“Why tarries he upon the hour
Our love has trysted here?—
To wander secret to my bower
Where none may see nor hear!

“Why sing the waves so plaintively?
Why lies the mist so drear?
The song is as a dirge to me;
My heart is fain with fear.”

Lo! one has loitered in the veil,
The film of silvery shroud.
The Lady Myrta breasts the gale,
And cries to him aloud:

“Why tarriest thou upon the hour
Our love has trysted here?
Oh, haste thee! haste thee to my bower,
Where none may see nor hear.”

But to the Lady Myrta's word
 No single word replies;
 Her speech but dies as all unheard,
 Unheard her passioned cries.

And now she speeds adown the way
 Unto her laggard love;
 Nor yet the waves their clamors stay,
 The mist still clings above.

And now she reaches him, and now
 Puts forth her eager hand.
 Oh, here were shame, and shame enow
 To curse this golden strand!

'Tis he, her lord, so old, so grim,
 Who fronts her! And his eyes,
 That erst were flickering and dim,
 Flame hate at her surprise.

"Your lover swims in yonder sea,"
 He cries, and points adown
 A hundred fathoms' mystery
 Of waves by tempests blown.

"And wilt thou, too, oh, falsely wed,
 My lady, keep thy tryst
 Within yon dainty bridal bed?
 Of Death wouldst thou be kissed?"

The Lady Myrta scans the flood,
 She leaps upon the verge;
 For love and madness make her mood—
 Love waits within the surge.

"Why sings the sea so sad?" cries she;
 "And lies the mist so drear?
 The dirge is love's own song to me,
 And love shall know no fear!"

And calls she o'er the dread abyss,
 Unto the seas that moan:
 "O Death, I hunger for thy kiss!—"
 . . . The old man is alone.

Why sing the waves so plaintively?
 Why lies the mist so drear?
 Hark to the song of the surging sea—
 Love's madness and love's fear.

A silver mist lies on the land,
 And it lies upon the sea—
 A mourning veil from God's own hand,
 Down dropped of mystery.



OPEN confession is good for the soul but—bad for the reputation.

DANS LA PEUR

Par Charles Foley

ASSISE, dans son avant-scène de droite, à côté de Mme Blavaine, la duchesse Elise d'Albigny écoutait la pièce avec distraction. Debout, derrière elle, son mari, Lionel d'Albigny, se dressait dans l'ombre de la loge, très svelte en son frac élégant. Le reflet de son plastron éclairait son beau visage immobilisé dans une expression de froideur hautaine. Et, tout en enveloppant cette salle de première, cette salle comble, lumineuse, froufroulante, de son regard clair et furtif, il caressait avec satisfaction sa moustache soyeuse et blonde entre deux de ses doigts longs, minces et lourds de bagues.

Sans savoir pourquoi, Elise se sentait triste. Peut-être, en sa robe trop somptueuse, sous ses diamants trop éclatants, avait-elle conscience de paraître un peu timide, un peu rouge, un peu provinciale, près de cette ravissante Mme Blavaine, dont la tête affinée, le col délicat et les épaules blanches s'élançaient en pistil de chair pâle et précieuse du calice bouffant d'un corsage de plumes et de dentelles noires. Peut-être regrettait-elle cette présence importune qui la privait d'un échange d'impressions intimes avec Lionel — et cependant c'était elle-même qui, malgré les objections de son mari, avait invité cette jeune et jolie femme à partager leur loge. Peut-être, enfin, en face d'un décor évocateur de paysages bleus, Elise se rappelait-elle les pâturages et les forêts d'Amérique où elle avait vécu toute son enfance paisible. Elle ne se doutait pas alors que son père, le vieillard encore si rude à toutes besognes, pourrait la doter de plusieurs millions. Oui, cependant, elle si humble, un

beau jeune seigneur d'outre-mer l'était venue chercher. Quand son père lui avait présenté l'élégant et fier cavalier qui souriait avec condescendance, elle avait ressenti de la crainte, puis de la surprise. Mais, quand on avait prononcé le mot fiançailles, au premier baiser permis par le vieillard, sous la caresse savamment chatouilleuse des moustaches d'or, le cœur aimant et naïf d'Elise s'était subitement grisé d'une tendresse délicate. Le mariage, le voyage de noces, l'installation à Paris, ne les avait-elle pas rêvés? Et son bonheur d'épouse avait fait de son amour de fiancée une adoration si pleine de gratitude et d'effusion que son père en passant par la France, dans son petit tour d'Europe, lui avait conseillé, dans un sourire madré:

— Aime ton mari, ma petite duchesse, mais ne le lui montre pas tant! S'il a le nom, c'est toi qui as l'argent. Souviens-toi que le bonheur t'est dû; je te l'ai payé très cher!

Ces paroles-là, la petite duchesse les avait jugées brutales, grossières, presque cruelles, quoique sorties de la bouche de son père. Elle s'était dépêchée de les oublier. Et, gagné à sa tendresse, enveloppé de ses caresses naïves, Lionel d'Albigny se laissait adorer avec condescendance.

— Il m'aime autant qu'il peut aimer, pensait Elise. Sa façon fière, hautaine, d'apparence un peu froide, tient à son caractère même. Quoi de plus naturel? Je suis humble et peu jolie, il est si noble et si beau!

La petite duchesse fut tirée de sa rêverie par un mouvement de Mme Blavaine. La jeune femme venait de faire tomber son éventail et se baissait pour le ramasser. D'Albigny était

demeuré immobile, distrait; il lorgnait la salle. L'incident confirma les réflexions d'Elise:

— Comme Lionel montre peu d'empressement, observa-t-elle, pour cette femme, cependant si séduisante! Il la regarde à peine, il ne lui parle pas, tandis qu'il me sourit dès que je le regarde, me répond avec expansion dès que je l'interroge. Je crois qu'ils se déplaisent mutuellement; mais combien chacun d'eux est gracieux pour moi!

Pourquoi, malgré cette remarque de femme heureuse, Elise, dans un malaise de pressentiment, demeurerait-elle songeuse, mélancolique?

Tout à coup, couvrant le dialogue de la pièce qu'Elise n'écoutait pas, une rumeur s'éleva dans la salle. Des spectateurs se levèrent; d'autres, encore assis, désignèrent le côté droit du théâtre d'un geste d'effroi. La petite duchesse, troublée en sa rêverie, tourna ses regards vers la rampe. Elle vit que les acteurs se retiraient précipitamment vers le fond. Du même côté que son avant-scène, un peu de fumée s'échappait des portants sans que la jeune femme pût voir d'où cela provenait. Mme Blavaine se pencha davantage. Aussitôt, frémissante, effarée, elle se rejeta brusquement en arrière et, haletante, siffla entre ses dents qui claquaient:

— Le décor a pris feu!

Lionel n'eut même pas l'idée de vérifier le fait. Un regard dans la salle le convainquit: tout le monde se sauvait. A l'orchestre, les spectateurs escaladaient les fauteuils, se pressaient, se ruaient au pourtour, vers la sortie, dans un grouillement de luttes obscures et sourdes. Dans les loges, des femmes s'élançaient vers le couloir, d'autres tournaient sur elles-mêmes ou heurtaient les cloisons comme pour les abattre; d'autres, enfin, debout, roidies, hypnotisées de frayeur, la bouche tordue de cris qui s'étranglaient, restaient les yeux grands ouverts et fixés sur les balcons déserts, sur la scène balayée et vidée comme sous une rafale de panique. Et le plus poignant, en cette fuite d'épouvante, c'était le

silence—le silence de cette foule opprimée, étouffée, rendue muette par la peur de la mort.

Elise demeura d'abord saisie par ce spectacle d'horreur, puis se retourna sans hâte, avec sang-froid, pour demander à Lionel ce qu'elle devait faire. Elle vit Mme Blavaine qui, livide, éperdue, empêtrée dans sa traîne et son fauteuil renversé, venait de tomber sur la marche qu'elle voulait franchir. Elise lui tendit la main, l'aida du mieux qu'elle put. Debout, Mme Blavaine se précipita vers la porte. La duchesse releva le fauteuil pour passer; puis, à son tour, gagna le fond de la loge, mais avec plus de calme, car cela lui semblait honteux qu'on eût si peur d'un peu de fumée. Elle avait vu, maintes fois, le feu prendre aux granges de son père. Tous les habitants de la ferme, hommes, femmes, enfants, combattaient alors les flammes pas à pas: c'était toujours dur, parfois long; mais, si surnois qu'il fût, on arrivait toujours à vaincre l'incendie.

Cependant Elise se dépêcha, parce qu'elle était inquiète de Lionel. Elle l'aperçut dans l'ombre, au fond de l'avant-scène. Il lui tournait le dos et tentait, de ses doigts nerveux et crispés, d'ouvrir les deux battants de la porte pour leur faire le passage plus large. Complètement affolée, ne comprenant plus rien, Mme Blavaine se jeta sur cette porte et la tira, tandis que le jeune homme la poussait en sens contraire. Fiévreux, troublés, hors d'eux, incapables de s'expliquer, ils balbutiaient des mots incohérents.

— Mais, madame, s'écria la duchesse, la porte s'ouvre en dehors. Laissez-moi votre place: j'aiderai Lionel mieux que vous.

Dominé par cette voix résolue, Mme Blavaine s'écarta. Elise et Lionel purent ouvrir la porte. C'était, dans le couloir, dégringolant des galeries par un escalier de côté, un effroyable torrent, une cohue d'hommes et de femmes ahanant de terreur. Enchevêtrés, ils se déchiraient, s'écrasaient, se broyaient entre les murs.

Elise, hésitante, reculant d'instinct, demandait à son mari:

— Faut-il se jeter là-dedans?

Mais Lionel, grelottant, comme saisi déjà par la démente de cette marée vivante, ne lui répondait pas, ne semblait plus la connaître, ne regardait plus que Mme Blavaine. Une éclaircie se produisant tout à coup dans la foule, il cria :

— Glisse-toi ! faufile-toi !... Sors, mais sors donc vite !

A ce tutoiement, bien que les yeux de son mari fussent ailleurs, Elise crut qu'il lui parlait. Et elle allait s'enfoncer dans la foule quand elle sentit que Mme Blavaine la tirait en arrière, la bousculait furieusement pour passer devant elle. Indignée, elle résista, murmurant :

— Vous allez me faire tomber, madame ! Lâchez-moi, nous passerons bien tous trois !

Mais elle fut subitement arrachée de la porte, brutalement poussée, collée à la cloison de la loge. Et, glacée d'horreur, elle vit son mari livide, les lèvres blanches, les dents serrées, son mari, la face convulsée d'une expression féroce et lâche, les prunelles toutes claires d'une lueur de folie, qui l'acculait au mur, lui enfonçait cruellement son poing crispé dans la poitrine, ses bagues dures en pleine chair, et hurlait à l'autre femme, d'une voix d'angoisse et de passion :

— Mais qu'est-ce que tu attends ? Passe, je t'en conjure, passe vite !

Ah ! la vision de cauchemar ! L'atroce parole surgie du fond ténébreux de l'âme, sous la montée de la peur ! Ah ! comme la poussée du bestial instinct de vivre arrachait le sourire, crevait le masque, montrait à nu la hideur du mensonge et de la trahison !

Elise ne résista plus, laissa passer la femme et l'homme ; puis, elle se traîna sans force, se laissa tomber sur une chaise de la loge et, ferment les yeux de douleur, cachant son visage dans ses mains, brisée, l'âme morte déjà, elle attendit la mort.

Elle n'entendait plus qu'une rumeur lointaine de fleuve qui s'écoule, elle ne pensait plus, elle ne percevait plus rien de ce qui se passait. Mais l'horrible image restait fixée au fond

de ses yeux. Elle revoyait l'homme blême, aux traits décomposés, qui, en bête aux abois, l'avait brutalisée, meurtrie, frappée, afin de sauver l'autre ! Et prise de désespoir, de dégoût infinis, la petite duchesse sanglotait sans pouvoir verser de larmes :

— Ah oui ! qu'ils passent... qu'ils passent... qu'ils retournent à la vie... Si la vie est ainsi, je préfère la mort !...

Elle n'avait plus peur ; elle attendait les flammes comme une délivrance, comme la purification, l'oubli, l'anéantissement de ce souvenir d'horreur tragique...

Cependant quelques bruits renaissaient autour d'elle. Aucun embrassement de flammes, aucune suffocation de fumée. Mme d'Albigny rouvrit les yeux. La salle restait illuminée, l'atmosphère était respirable, on n'avait même pas baissé le rideau de fer. Elle crut sortir tout à coup du cauchemar. Penchée, elle aperçut les planches de la scène mouillées ; des pompiers, très gais, après la fausse alerte, roulaient, emportaient leurs tuyaux, et trois machinistes remplaçaient déjà le portant à peine noirci d'une mince lèchade de flamme. Le régisseur, les figurants, rassurés, venaient constater le dégât léger, tandis que, à l'orchestre, dans les loges, quelques spectateurs, craintifs encore, regagnaient leurs places.

Dix minutes après, devant la salle à demi remplie, on refrappait les trois coups, les acteurs reparaissaient, recommençaient le dialogue, et la pièce reprenait son cours.

Elise ne pouvait plus écouter, ne pouvait plus regarder. Les yeux de férocité claire, la voix d'angoisse et de passion l'obsédaient. Il lui semblait que les places abandonnées près d'elle et derrière elle ouvraient, tout à l'entour, un vide immense. Soudain, une petite toux sèche, nerveuse, embarrassée, la fit tressaillir, se retourner. Lionel venait de rentrer, le plastron un peu cassé, l'habit froissé, mais le visage apaisé, la mine froide et hautaine. Il s'approcha de la jeune femme et payant d'audace, souriant comme si rien d'effroyable ne s'était passé, il murmura :

— Vous avez très bien fait de ne pas sortir de cette loge, ainsi que je vous conjurais de le faire. Mme Blavaine s'est tirée de la cohue à demi écharpée. Ayant tout de suite su qu'il n'y avait aucun danger, je vous ai laissés pour mettre cette peureuse en voiture. Ah! par contraste, chère amie, que vous m'avez parue admirable de sang-froid!

La malheureuse femme se détourna sans répondre. Ce sourire, qu'elle admirait il n'y avait pas une demi-heure, lui semblait à présent un ignoble rictus d'hypocrisie. Elle comprenait qu'elle ne pourrait plus jamais se trouver devant cet homme sans se rappeler la face convulsée, l'expression féroce, les prunelles claires de ce fou qui, dans sa peur et sa force de lâche, avait repoussé sa femme pour sauver sa maîtresse! A demeurer sous le regard de ce mari devenu tout à coup l'étranger perfide qu'on redoute, elle avait l'im-

pression d'être enveloppée de mensonge et de trahison! Ah! combien le sentir, silencieux et guetteur, derrière elle, si près d'elle, cela lui semblait encore plus tragique que leur lutte effrénée et sauvage contre la porte!

Et la petite duchesse songeait encore:

— Tout mon amour, tous mes espoirs et toutes mes illusions viennent d'être anéantis par ce petit bout de toile peinte qui n'a même pas flambé!

Mais voyant que, de plusieurs loges, on la lorgnait, non pas pour elle, mais pour ses diamants, elle leva vite ses jumelles devant ses yeux, afin de cacher ses larmes qui, cette fois, coulaient. Et, pénétrée de toute sa misère de millionnaire, elle pensa, toute frissonnante en face d'un danger plus terrible:

— Maintenant, comme cela va m'être difficile de vivre... et c'était, tout à l'heure, si facile de mourir!



HER COMING

TO-DAY I met her—Spring—
 Tender, rapturous, sweet-lipped thing!
 I kissed her eyes and she smiled again,
 Smiled through her tears as sunlit rain.
 I've walked with her all this wondrous day,
 Whispering secrets, lover-way;
 She knows the pain of my Winter heart,
 Prisoned in grim town walls, apart
 From the riotous, vagabond god, young Pan,
 Whose child I've been since the world began;
 Knows how my fretted spirit cried
 For upland hopes, green spaces wide.
 I laid my head on her perfumed breast,
 Where the early blossoms cling soft-pressed,
 And the sky seemed set with violets—
 Oh, Love remembers and Love forgets.

Could you not hear her—Spring—
 Bidding the homesick birds to sing?
 You did not see her face, you say?
 The birds were mute, the skies were gray?
 Poor holden sense!—She called to me
 Till I thrilled with passionate ecstasy.

To-day I met her—Spring—
 Wild, alluring, flower-eyed thing!

EMERY POTTLE.

THE HYPOCRITE

By Edith Elmer Wood

CALEB FOOTE was dying. The doctor had told him that he could not live more than twenty-four hours, and that any excitement or over-exertion might bring the end sooner. He had felt it his duty to answer Caleb's questions frankly, doing as he would be done by, that the old man might have due warning to set his affairs in order.

Caleb's worldly concerns, indeed, did not require any last touches. He was a careful and methodical man, who left no loose ends hanging. But certain spiritual matters were very much on his mind.

As soon as the doctor was gone, Caleb sent for the minister. Unfortunately, he had started on the early train for a couple of days in the city, and Caleb had not so much time to spare. There seemed to be no alternative but to send for Elder Jewett.

Caleb instinctively shrank from the ordeal of this interview, and longed for the riper wisdom of the clergyman. But he could not afford to delay, and he derived some melancholy comfort from the thought that this last disappointment might be laid on him as a part—oh, a very small part, of course—of the punishment for his sins.

As he lay in the great four-poster bed, waiting for the elder, his thoughts were busy with the past. The pain of the old memories showed so plainly in his face that his wife touched him on the arm, and asked, anxiously, "Air ye suff'rin' much, Cabe?"

"Not so much ez might be, Cynthy, not near," he answered, smiling. "Ye mustn't worry now."

The old woman choked down a sob, and hid her face in the coverlid.

"There, there, mother, don't ye take on," he said.

She tried, but it was hard for her to regain her self-control. They had been married so long—nearly half a century. There was to have been a golden-wedding party, with all the children and grandchildren back at home, and now—— Her imagination shrank from the picture conjured up, and turned to the past for relief. It had been such a perfect married life! They had had their share of sickness and sorrow, but it had only drawn them closer together. He had always been so good to her, so gentle and considerate. Looking back over the years, she could not remember a hard word from him or an ungenerous act. No one that she knew had such a husband; and now he was going to leave her. She had always expected to be the first to go. She had been a half-way invalid for years, and he had been tireless in his attendance on her. She lifted his wasted hand, and laid her tremulous old lips against it.

"Don't, Cynthy," he begged, distressedly. She could not know that every evidence of her tenderness was causing the old remorse to gnaw more savagely at his heart.

He was enduring no physical pain. The little spasms that crossed his face from time to time were wrung from the mental agony within. The hour was coming for him to appear before his God—in his conception, a stern, avenging judge, the Jehovah of the Old Testament; and he knew that he, Caleb

Foote, was a sinner among sinners, that his fair-seeming life had been a sham and a lie. To himself at least, he had never made any pretenses. He was not a hypocrite by nature. He knew, as he had always known, the full measure of his guilt. His whole soul was writhing with self-loathing now, as it had in all his moments of deeper consciousness for nearly forty years. He had thought so often how he would unburden himself at the last to his minister, beneath whose surface austerity was an inexhaustible stock of human kindness. But Elder Jewett—well, it was the will of the Lord.

The elder came in, correct in every particular, a just and perfect man in the sight of God. The sinner on the bed shifted his position uneasily.

"Will ye leave us for a few minutes, mother?" Caleb asked his wife.

The elder bowed approval of this preparation for serious discourse.

Caleb had planned so often what he was to say that his words came rapidly as soon as the door was closed, though they cost him an unsuspected amount of effort.

"I want to hev some words with ye, Brother Jewett. The shadder o' death lays on me, an' I want to make my peace with God afore I go. I know the Lord's merciful, an' He's promised to forgive them ez are truly penitent. But I can't feel right sure He'll forgive me, for I've been a sinner beyond other men."

"We are all sinners, Brother Foote," said the elder, somewhat perfunctorily.

"Yes, yes, I know. But I don't mean that sort. I don't mean the kind that pesters itself about not bein' grateful enough or fallin' short o' the divine standard o' perfection. I'm talkin' about real, downright, black sin an' breakin' the commandments."

The elder looked at him, sharply. Caleb noticed the tightness of his upper lip, and felt irritated by it, as he had a hundred times before. All at once, he knew that he could never make to this man the full confession he had intended. The words simply would not come.

"What's on yer mind, Brother Foote?"

"It 'uz a long time ago—thirty-eight year or tharabout—I done a great wrong to one I'd never had nothin' but kindness from. . . . An' I ain't had no peace in my heart since."

He paused, and the elder waited, evidently expecting him to go on.

"Ain't ye ever tried to right the wrong ye done?" the elder asked, at last.

"If I *could* hev!" the other gasped. "But I couldn't. 'Twa'n't that kind o' thing. 'Twuz done, an' couldn't be undone. The Almighty Himself couldn't undo it!"

The elder's upper lip tightened still more.

"Doubtin' the power o' God ain't the way to secure His forgiveness," he said, sententiously. "Ever ask the forgiveness o' the party ye injured?" he inquired, presently, as the sick man continued silent.

The look of terror that swept over Caleb's face did not need the feeble "No" he uttered to make his meaning clear.

"Then yer duty's plain, Brother Foote. Send fer him now, an' confess yer fault, an' do whatever ye can to make restitution. If the human brother can forgive, it's likely the Lord will, too."

"No, no," murmured Caleb, in a frightened voice, "not that! I can't do that. An' 't 'udn't do no good, if I did. There ain't no restitution possible, I tell ye."

The elder regarded him with contracted eyebrows.

"I don't jest foller yer reasonin's, Brother Foote," he said, severely. "I dare say it comes hard to confess, but——"

"'Tain't that I'm afeard to own up," the sick man interrupted, eagerly. "It 'ud be the greatest comfort in the world to tell it out an' hev done with it. I'd 'a' done it years an' years ago, if I'd 'a' been the only one to think of. But I've no right to confess other folks' sins for 'em. Ye see, I wa'n't the only one consarned."

The elder shook his head, disapprovingly.

"I'm afraid Satan has a strong hold on ye, Brother Foote. Ye've no call to be shelterin' yer partners in wrongdoin'. Confession is a duty ye owe to yerself an' to yer God. That's all ye need to consarn yerself about. Even if disgrace in this life should overtake the other guilty ones tharby, it might, in the workin's o' Providence, be the means o' savin' their immortal parts from the wrath to come."

Caleb groaned. Before his mind rose the picture of his "partner in wrongdoing." She was a grandmother now, living in honored old age. Would public disgrace be the means of "saving her immortal part"? Was it conceivable, even, that it needed saving? He saw before him in imagination the delicate, shrinking little woman whom he had not seen with his bodily eyes for five-and-thirty years, although she lived but a few miles away. He recalled the poignant agony of shame and remorse with which she had viewed her own frailty. It had been all his fault—all his fault from beginning to end. He had won her love, to which he had no right, and she had loved him. Ah! A faint smile flickered into his eyes. Then he pulled himself up sharply. Was his heart hankering after its old sin, in spite of the years that had passed—and he on his deathbed? With an effort, he brought his thoughts back where they belonged.

"I've no right to leave a legacy o' disgrace to my wife an' children," he said, firmly, "jest to make my mind feel easier."

"The iniquity o' the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third an' fourth generation.' It is the will o' the Lord. Who are we that we should oppose it?"

Caleb winced.

"Yes, that's so. An', if the Lord sees fit to afflict them for my sin, He will. But I can't bear that my hand should be the one to strike the blow."

"The heart is very deceitful, Brother Foote. Ain't it rather yerself that ye're tryin' so hard to spare?"

Now, Caleb was not quite sure that he was not that particular sort of a coward. He had asked himself just that question many times. He waited a moment before he answered. During that moment, his wife's image rose before him, patient, loving and trustful, as she had been through all the years of their married life. He was sure that, if he told her of his old unfaithfulness, she would forgive him. But it would break her heart. If he forced himself to confide in Elder Jewett, he foresaw, with sickening certainty, what would happen. The elder would still insist on his confessing his sin to his wife, and, if he refused to do so, would tell her himself in order to assure to the dying man the benefit of her forgiveness. Elder Jewett was not one to abandon the standard he himself had set up. If it were only the minister now!

"I've been a-thinkin' o' what ye said, Brother Jewett, an' a-wonderin' if I could be that mean. I've been a-searchin' my heart, an' I don't feel noways inclined to be too confident. But I don't *think* it's that way with me. It's really so that it don't seem right for me to shift the burden I've been a-carryin' so long to the shoulders o' the innocent. The person I injured couldn't be helped by me confessin'. It 'ud only bring unhappiness to—that person, a powerful sight o' unhappiness. 'Tain't ez if there was any atonement I could make."

He did not count as atonement the long years of tenderness and devotion in which he had been trying to "make it up to Cynthy." He would have been unspeakably shocked if the thought had ever crossed his mind that he had been kinder to her in the thousand trifles of every-day life, that he had effaced himself more for her sake, that he had borne her various little unreasonablenesses and faultfindings more patiently—in short, had made her happier than he would have done if he had had no sin on his conscience. He would have said it was "the least any one with a remnant o' decency could do," and no doubt he would have been

right. Some people with uneasy consciences take it out, in irritability and neglect, on those they have injured, whose very presence seems a mute reproach. Caleb was differently constituted. Such a line of action presented no temptation to him, so, of course, he took no credit to himself for avoiding it. On the daily rack of torture, where his remorse kept him stretched, these countless little acts of self-abnegation were the only things that brought him relief.

The elder had dropped on his knees beside the bed, and was "wrestling with the Lord in prayer," begging Him to soften the hard heart of the dying sinner.

"Do ye feel that ye can speak now?" he asked, as he rose.

Caleb shook his head.

"I've made my confession to God. He knows all about it. Ask Him to forgive me."

"'Pears to me it's a very easy matter to make a confession to God, seein' as He knows it all a'ready, an' it ain't a-goin' to interfere any with yer good name in the world that ye set such store by," observed the elder, with some acuteness. "'Pears to me, ye want to buy yer way to heaven mighty cheap, Brother Foote."

Caleb flushed at the crassness of the suggestion. He, the open-handed Caleb, to be accused of bargaining with his Creator! But, perhaps, this also was a part of his punishment. He kept his temper, and said only, "I'm afeard there ain't no chance o' you an' me agreein' to look at this the same way. I guess I'll hev to do my own prayin'—with Cynthia's help. I won't keep ye any longer, Brother Jewett."

But the elder felt it his duty to remain. An immortal soul was at stake.

"'Except ye repent an' confess yer sins, ye shall in nowise be saved!'" he cried, and his voice sounded full of authority.

Caleb's cheek blanched. He did not remember that passage, but he never doubted that it was Scripture, as well as what followed.

The elder went on with increasing exaltation:

"'Harken to the word o' the Lord! They shall confess their sins which they have done.' And in another place, 'Confess yer faults one to another. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom o' heaven, but he that doeth the will o' my Father. They shall gather out o' His kingdom all things that offend, an' them which do iniquity, an' shall cast them into a furnace o' fire; there shall be wailing an' gnashing o' teeth. After thy hardness an' impenitent heart, thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day o' wrath. Tribulation an' anguish upon every soul o' man that doeth evil! Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish! If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off an' cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one o' thy members should perish, an' not that thy whole body should be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not an' the fire is not quenched. Woe unto you, scribes an' Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full o' dead men's bones an' o' all uncleanness. How can ye escape the damnation o' hell?'"

As the familiar words of the Book he revered were hurled at him, the dying man seemed fairly to shrink and shrivel before the scorching blast that they pictured. To him, there was no figure of speech in it all, but a literal sea of burning pitch, seething and bubbling under a mass of fiery vapor, in the midst of which human beings like himself shrieked and writhed—not for a year, nor a thousand years, but for all eternity. There was no shadow of doubt in his mind.

"Can't ye see some hope?" he whispered.

"Not unless yer heart is softened to confess yer sins," came the stern answer.

Caleb did not dream of questioning the strict orthodoxy and correctness of the elder's religious views. There was no lurking hope in his heart that

God might be more merciful than Ephraim Jewett. The alternatives were sharply before him. On the one hand, forgiveness and eternal joy, but at the price of destroying his wife's illusions, laying on her in her old age a grievous burden and holding to her faithful lips a draught of great bitterness. There was the chance, too, that his confession might bring dishonor to that other woman, and cast a blot on the lives of innocent children. On the other hand, they would be secured from any harm that could come to them through him, and his wife, though mourning his loss, would find comfort in thinking well of him. And he . . . There were the flames, the undying flames . . . His cold flesh quivered, his shrunken frame trembled at the thought. But the sin

was his, and it was right that he should take the punishment of it, not others who were guiltless. He saw no heroism in his choice. It was the matter-of-fact avoidance of what looked to him an unpardonable lack of manliness.

"Aren't ye goin' to confess?" cried the elder, with a note of horror in his voice. For he, too, saw the flames licking around the feet of the dying man, whose hardness of heart appalled him.

"No," said Caleb, firmly.

He shut his lips tight, as though to keep the secret sealed forever. Then, by a supreme effort of self-conquering will, he turned his face to the wall.

The living spark that still burned feebly in the worn-out body flickered a moment, and went out. Caleb Foote was dead.



BLUE AND GOLD

BLUE of a burning, boundless sky,
Gold of a boundless, splendid sod;
Prodigal noontide, far and nigh,
Blue and gold on the plains of God.

League on league of the yellow grass,
Rolling, an endless inland sea;
Room for a world to rise and pass,
Room for love and the years to be!

Depth on depth of the bending blue,
Bare and infinite, living fire;
So could I bare my soul to you,
Height and depth of my heart's desire!

MABEL EARLE.



VERY LIKELY

"NO one has yet told us that the baby looked like his father."
"Perhaps no one has dared."

WHEN LOVE WAS DEAD

WHEN Love was dead, quite dead, and past all pain,
 Beyond all prayers and all reproaches said,
 I laid him where no other love had lain—
 When Love was dead.

In a dark chamber of my heart, so fain
 I was to let that heart be comforted,
 Remembering no longer; but in vain.

One night, I crept and touched his brow, instead,
 And suddenly my tears fell warm, like rain:
 I could have sworn Love sighed and stirred again,
 Though Love was dead.

NANNIE BYRD TURNER.



“BUT isn't Miss Ohlder truthful?”

“Well, she told me she was the youngest of twelve children, and that they were all living.”



WHERE SEA AND RIVER MEET

THE tide goes out, and in its peace serene
 The river dreams all through the afternoon,
 Or, turning drowsily, begins to croon
 A lullaby along its banks of green;
 And then, through rising mist but dimly seen,
 There gleams a silvered star and crescent moon,
 The great deep faintly chanting prayer and rune
 Across the stretch of sand that lies between.

The tide comes in, and, with the passionate flow,
 The river's heart goes out to find the sea,
 Its utmost waters moving toward the sun;
 And so, together, Life and Love must go—
 Where sea and river meet, thy love for me
 And mine for thee, must rise and be as one.

MYRTLE REED.

THE MASK OF COMEDY

By Stanhope Sams

“A BIG nose is not always a bad thing to have,” said the famous specialist, Dr. Danvers, as he and two or three other physicians dropped in at the club, after seeing Coquelin as Cyrano.

“Now, De Bergerac had to fight every other man he met, and missed winning fame and a charming girl, because he had a big nose that he did not appreciate. I know of a case in which it was quite the other way about.”

“Tell us your story,” urged Dr. Jenkins. “I have a theory that everything is possible to a man, if only he has a big-enough nose.”

“For certain things,” said the great surgeon, “a big nose is absolutely essential. I shall tell you of the one I refer to, which was the most valuable and interesting nose I have ever seen or heard of.”

And this is the story as Dr. Danvers told it, after he and his friends had settled themselves comfortably in their easy-chairs.

It happened long enough ago for me to speak freely of it now. I was house-surgeon at one of the large hospitals in this city at the time, and early one morning a young man was brought in who had been very severely burned. We were then experimenting with various methods of treating burns, and I at once saw possibilities of an interesting case.

I went to the private room where the patient had been taken. On the record I noticed that his name was Sidney Leslie. As I entered, I saw, resting upon the pillows of the bed, the most remarkable head I had ever seen.

Although I was fully aware of the fellow's acute suffering, the face struck me as laughably grotesque. The chin was large and deeply cleft, and the nose was the nose of those absurd comic masks that little boys wear in the streets on Thanksgiving Day. These features made the man look like a clown, although the rest of the face and head was regular, and even fine. This much I took in at a glance, and at once set to work to relieve his pain.

I found that his chest was severely burned and that one of his legs was broken. Both injuries, I afterward learned, were received while trying to get back into his room to save some valuable personal papers that he had overlooked in his flight. The broken leg was simple, but the burns could be treated satisfactorily only by skin-grafting. As I had not, at that time, made a specialty of this class of operations, I immediately called to my assistance the great surgeon, Dr. Stendahl, who was then the acknowledged master in all cases of skin surgery.

When I told the young fellow that the only way in which we could deal satisfactorily with his injuries would be by planting fresh skin on his chest, he merely smiled and said, “Go ahead.”

Well, we went ahead. There was something fine in his bearing. He did not flinch under his intense sufferings any more than one of Fenimore Cooper's Indians.

“Will there be any scars?” he asked, very suddenly, as I was about to administer the anesthetic.

“None whatever,” said Stendahl.

“The new skin will be perfectly

natural—look just like the rest?" he asked.

"Exactly," said Stendahl.

"I don't care about scars—at least there," he said, "as I am not a society young lady, but——"

He didn't finish the sentence. I administered the ether, and Stendahl fell sternly to his task. It was a slow process then, and we were at work for a good many days.

In the intervals of our task, Leslie was very talkative, and confided to me that he was English, although his accent had long since betrayed him. He also had a great deal to ask about skin-grafting, and one morning, in a half-questioning way, he said to Stendahl:

"I suppose, doctor, if you can graft skin, you can also cut away flesh and replace the skin, so that that part of the body would look as natural as before?"

Dr. Stendahl made no reply, and I thought the question had not penetrated his quiet and deep abstraction.

Leslie tried again, after a pause:

"I remember hearing that in Paris——"

"We can do it just as well as the French," said Stendahl, his mind flashing luminously back to Leslie's first question.

Leslie said nothing, but I could see that he was thinking very earnestly.

In a few days, we had got on very friendly terms. He was talkative, and, as I was deeply interested in the skin-grafting, we had abundant opportunity for conversation. He talked of all kinds of surgical operations, but always avoided bringing out what he wanted to say, and what I knew he wanted to say.

One day he suddenly turned his face squarely to me, as if he wanted me to observe it closely.

"What did you think I was, doctor, when I was brought here?"

"I didn't try to divine your occupation, if that is what you mean," I replied.

"You must have formed some idea—from my looks, I mean—my nose, my chin."

"I noticed that they were peculiar," I said, "since you force me to make so personal a remark."

"You didn't fancy I was an actor, did you?"

I smiled. "Well, that vocation didn't occur to me, I must confess."

"Hardly, with this nose and chin."

I saw his thought, and sought to help him.

"Yes, it could be done," I ventured.

"Could it, now?" His face was aglow.

"Without doubt," I said.

"When?" he eagerly persisted.

"At once, I suppose; or at least as soon as you are able to stand the extra operation."

"Oh, I am ready for that now!"

He was silent a while, and then he went back to his original thought.

"I wanted to be a great actor, but this chin and nose made me a clown. I aspired to romantic and classic rôles—D'Artagnan, Don Cæsar, Melnotte, Romeo, with Hamlet in the remote future; but Nature said, 'No! You are meant for Harlequin, Pierrot.' Coquelin has a mask of a face, also, but he is a born comedian, and his very homeliness of countenance is a handmaiden to his genius. My talent, if I may call it such, is for romance, and yet I was condemned to the vaudeville stage or the circus ring!"

He looked up, almost in appeal.

"Can't you surgeons make my nose straight, change this cleft chin, give me at least a regular face, that will not excite laughter?"

"I am confident we can do it," I said.

"Then you must try!"

I answered Leslie that, as soon as I could make arrangements with Dr. Stendahl, we should begin the new operation.

Dr. Stendahl was delighted when I told him what Leslie wanted, but he could not forego his criticism.

"Vanity of vanities! I thought that even in France they left that sort of thing to the women!"

"It is not that," I said, warmly, for Leslie had somehow fired me with his enthusiastic belief in himself. "Don't

you see? He is an actor, and that satyr face stands between him and fame!"

"Ah!" said he; "then we shall make an Adonis of him, and liberate an imprisoned genius!"

When we went to Leslie's room to prepare for the operation, we found him very greatly excited.

"Can you—?" he began.

"Certainly," said Dr. Stendahl. "What kind of a face do you want?"

"Ah! I hadn't thought that far," he said. "I merely had in mind a good, strong, classic face—not too regular," he continued, as if he were working it out, like a problem. "And, of course, I should want it mobile, plastic. It wouldn't be stiff and hard, would it?"

"That depends on you. That is your task, not ours," said Dr. Stendahl. "We can give you practically a new face, which will be just as plastic as your present face. You may do with it as you wish."

"Shouldn't we work from a model?" suggested Leslie.

This was agreed upon, and I offered to purchase a dozen or so photographs of men with good noses and chins from which Leslie might make a selection.

"Not too classic," Leslie enjoined me, "and thoroughly American—the American of the West!"

Later in the day, I went to Leslie's room with a collection of photographs. He made his choice much more easily than I had expected, or than I should have done myself in a like case. We were now ready for the operation. Dr. Stendahl had spread out his instruments, and I was about to administer the anesthetic, when a great fear seized me.

"Wait!" I almost shouted. "We are about to destroy your identity!"

"That *would* be queer!" said Leslie, smiling at the thought, "although it would not be much of a loss!"

"I think it would be better to take a photograph of you as you are," I said.

This caused another delay, but soon the operation was begun, and was carried through with the greatest suc-

cess. Nose and chin were cut into classic shape, the skin readjusted, stitched and bandaged, and we waited patiently for the day when we could see exactly the effect of our work.

On the appointed day, I brought down my picture; only one had developed, but it was an excellent likeness, showing a three-quarters view, the effect of both full face and profile. Each of us examined it carefully. Leslie took it in both hands, and looked at it a long time, smiling at the homely, almost grotesque, but pleasant face he had dared to exhibit on the stage in serious drama. He laughed as well as his bandages permitted, and handed the photograph to Dr. Stendahl.

"Not a bad face," said the destroyer, "but I hope we have made a better-looking one for you."

I said nothing. I had not the perfect confidence of Dr. Stendahl that the miracle had really been achieved. We began cutting the threads carefully, and unwinding the long strips of the bandages. First the chin was exposed. It was bleached white by having been bound up so long, but it was as smooth and rounded and as perfect as the chin of Antinous!

We cut away the other bandages rapidly, and soon the whole face was revealed. The great surgeon surveyed his work calmly, though with an expression that showed his complete satisfaction. But I could not restrain myself. I cried out at the sculptured beauty and perfection of the face.

"A mirror, quick!" shouted Leslie.

He glanced hurriedly in the glass I handed to him, and tears came into his eyes, as he saw there his ideal face, and the future triumphs of his art.

"Now, the picture!" he said.

I handed him the photograph. He looked at it, compared it with the reflection of his transformed countenance, and, assuming a melodramatic air, said:

"Hyperion to a satyr!"

The same threadbare theatrical phrase had flashed into my own mind, and his words seemed like an echo.

Leslie left the hospital in a few days, fairly ecstatic with reawakened ambi-

tion. Before leaving, he asked me to give him the picture I had taken; but as I had determined to keep it as part of the "record" of the case, I promised to print another from the negative for him.

I did not see or hear of Leslie again for some time. I read the theatrical news assiduously—a thing I had never done before—but did not run across any mention of him, and I did not know under what name he had gone back to the stage. Of course, I expected he would burst into the stage heavens like a new planet. The press about that time was acclaiming a new star on the stage, but this new actor was described as an American, a Westerner, and his name was Herbert Romaine. As he acted Mercutio, In-gomar, Melnotte and Petruchio, I suspected that it was Leslie; but an epidemic of yellow fever had taken me to the South that Autumn, and I could not go to the theatre to see if Leslie and Romaine were one and the same. My doubts were resolved, however, by the announcement of Romaine's great triumph in *Don Caesar*, and I wrote to congratulate him. The very day I mailed my letter, I received one from him, signed "Herbert Romaine," with "Sidney Leslie" in brackets, thanking me for my share in his transfiguration, and saying he had written a similar letter to Dr. Stendahl. He had awaited his complete triumph before disclosing his identity.

It happened that I had met with a large measure of success in my yellow-fever work in the South, and the Uruguayan government, which was making an effort to conquer that disease, made me a tempting offer to go to Montevideo to search for the germ of yellow fever and to discover its anti-toxin. I accepted, and for two years buried myself in a hospital laboratory in Montevideo. My work there, of course, has nothing to do with this story.

One day a cablegram was handed to me. It was from Dr. Stendahl, and read:

Leslie wants fees restored. Can you come to New York immediately? Vital.

"Fees" was, of course, "face;" but the operator in Montevideo, not understanding the word "face" in such a connection, thought he had hit upon the right word by inspiration.

While hesitating as to what course I should take in such an emergency, another cablegram came. This was from Romaine himself, and read:

Matter fortune and happiness to me. Don't hesitate. You have my face, and I must have it back. Come at once. Will bear all expense and you may name fee.

I saw it was a desperate emergency. I was responsible for that lost face; so I answered that I would sail for New York by the next steamer.

At Rio de Janeiro, at Pernambuco, at Ponce, at every port we touched, two or three cablegrams were waiting for me. All were from Romaine, urging me to press on to New York with all possible despatch, and to cable ahead my directions about his face. Each was accompanied by a query from the cable operators, who wanted to help me out about that mysterious "face" that kept appearing in all the despatches. I think my cable to Romaine from Pernambuco must have shocked them dreadfully. I wrote:

Your face is in storage in New York. Can't help you till I get there. Keep cool.

As soon as our steamer slowed up at the quarantine station in New York harbor, I saw Romaine clambering over her side.

"By Jove, Danvers," he shouted, as he saw me, "I am glad to see you! Where is my face?"

"I don't know!"

"Don't know!" He staggered back against the rail.

"It's among my things in one of three storage houses and safe-deposit vaults," I said. "We shall find it. Don't worry."

"My God, man, I must worry!" he said. "Dr. Stendahl could have put back my old face, if he had only had the photograph to work by. Why didn't you send me a copy of the one you took?"

"The negative was ruined," I said. "But we shall fix you up all right in a little while. The picture is safe enough; only, I can't tell exactly where it is."

The truth was, I had been trying for days to recall just where I had put that photograph. I had left New York in haste to go South, but the picture was securely packed away—that much I could recall—and it would merely mean looking through several storage rooms and a box in my safe-deposit vault.

Well, we went through them all, and found the photograph after a three days' search, during which I thought Romaine would become mad. I discovered it among some family papers that I had been especially careful about.

Tears of joy filled Romaine's eyes when he at last got the photograph in his hands.

"You dear old clown!" he cried. "I haven't a fancy for this face, doctor, but just now I would rather look exactly that way—big nose, cleft chin and all—than to be as beautiful as Apollo!"

He sat brooding and moralizing over the picture, like Hamlet over Yorick's skull.

"I cabled you that it meant fortune and happiness, didn't I?"

"Yes," I said, "but it once meant quite other things; and you have won fortune and fame with your present face."

"This"—patting the photograph tenderly—"means much, much more. But," he broke off, "I shall tell you that part of my story when we meet Dr. Stendahl to-night, as the explanation is due to both of you."

That evening, we went by appointment to Dr. Stendahl's residence, and found the eminent surgeon awaiting us in his study in quite an excited state. He and Romaine, I knew, had had many a discussion about refixing the face, and the great specialist was eager to attack the delicate and difficult problem the new case presented.

"Here is your model, doctor!" Romaine shouted, as soon as he entered the study.

Dr. Stendahl took the photograph, and compared it with Romaine's face.

"I sha'n't enjoy this work as much as the first operation," he said, as the appalling difference between the two faces came to him. "I don't fancy marring my own masterpiece!"

Then he fell to examining the photograph very closely.

"Ah!" he suddenly exclaimed, "here is the real difficulty!" Romaine's face became white with terror. "It was easy enough to cut your face down to good lines—but to build it all back again! I don't believe any sculptor has ever restored the block of marble to the shape it was before he carved his statue from it! But that is what we must do!"

Neither Romaine nor I ventured a word. We left the great surgeon to grapple with the problem.

"If your face were only fat," said he; "but it isn't. It has preserved its classical lines as delicate and fine as they were when we carved them. But," he continued—he was no longer talking to us—"but, if we can graft skin, we can graft flesh with the skin!"

"Good!" exclaimed Romaine, "graft skin and flesh at the same time!"

But Romaine did not see the great difficulty of the case. Much of the skin covering the former expanse of his chin and nose had been cut away as surplusage in the operation, and, of course, a great deal of flesh had been cut away also. The famous old surgeon saw it all, however.

"It must be your own skin and flesh," said he.

"My own skin and flesh!" Romaine gasped. This Shylock rôle had not occurred to him.

"Of course," said Dr. Stendahl. It was all clear now. "What we need for your face we shall simply cut from some other part of your body. We shall start to-morrow."

Romaine was cool enough by this time, and merely said, "All right, I am ready; only, leave enough of me to take my face back to England!"

I now hinted to Romaine that it was a good time for his explanation, if he still wished to give it.

"Dr. Stendahl," he said, "you must have some curiosity about the reasons—the whim or the necessity—that led me to take this step."

"I have," said the specialist, "but I have taken it for granted you would tell me, if you wished me to know them."

"I should like to tell you and Dr. Danvers, because I feel that an explanation is due to you, and because it may add another interest to your case."

"Of course, you know that 'Romaine' is only a stage name. My real name is Harold Ferrars. The cause of my trouble was that I wanted to be an actor. As it happened, I was born heir to a considerable fortune, and my family, being of old English stock, expected me to live up to it by settling down as proprietor of a big country estate, and spending the remainder of my days in obscure respectability. But the stage had lured me to itself, and most of us take this feeling of temptation for genius. And so, despite the wishes of my father—my mother had been dead for years—I went on the stage. My father at once cut off my allowance, leaving me only a few thousand pounds, a bequest from my mother, which was then tied up in stocks. I had, therefore, to look to the stage for a living."

"But this was not the worst. I had been in love with a girl since my school-days, and we had expected to be married as soon as I finished my course at Oxford and settled down. This was now impossible. I would not give up my ambition, and I felt that I could not give up my sweetheart. I should have to work hard and win, for success meant winning her."

"It was just then I learned that nature had intended me to be a clown instead of a romantic actor. I had some talent for that line of drama, which theatrical managers recognized, and they gave me a chance to show what I could do. But no make-up could overcome my natural defects."

The audience would not take me otherwise than as nature intended. It laughed at me as D'Artagnan, when I attempted the rôle in a provincial town in England. When stage-managers and audiences laughed at Coquelin's face, he said he would let them laugh on, and he became the greatest comedian of the day. But I had only the mask of comedy, not its spirit. I knew I must act either the romantic drama or nothing."

"In desperation, I came to the States to try my fortune before a different audience. Again I pleased the managers, but could not make up enough to impersonate romantic rôles or to smother the uncontrollable laughter of the spectators."

"By this time, I was more desperate than ever. The stage seemed a forlorn hope, my allowance was still cut off, and I had lost all chance of marrying. I was driven to the vaudeville stage, where I acted, under another name, in farcical parts for some months, my mirth-provoking face serving me instead of talent for the sort of acting I loathed. But I managed to live."

"This was more than two years ago, the same Winter you gentlemen came to my rescue, and gave me the opportunity that nature had denied me. Two other important events happened that Winter. I unexpectedly got hold of the little fortune my mother had left me—some six thousand pounds—and shortly after this I was burned out of the apartment where I had lived for a year. The little fortune might have enabled me to return to England and marry, but my pride was too strong. I could not go from the vaudeville stage to the altar. I should have to win a better success first. I was about making another effort at romantic drama, by organizing a company, together with two or three young men who also thought their genius was going to waste, when the fire came. That put an end to everything for a time, as you know. But you do not know that it destroyed all my papers and other personal property. The tremendous import of this I did not

appreciate until two years later. When you scientists so coolly and so magnificently destroyed my identity, I did not realize that Harold Ferrars had actually vanished from the earth.

"I went upon the stage again under the name of Herbert Romaine, letting the vaudeviller, Sidney Leslie, drop into oblivion. I succeeded—thanks to your marvelous skill—scored a half-dozen triumphs in quick succession, rose to a respectable rank in the profession, and became independent.

"Of course, I was now anxious to marry, and arranged matters so that the wedding could take place in London this Summer during my vacation. My father died late in the Spring, and I had, also, to settle the estate. As I had been estranged from my father for some years, his death did not deeply overcloud my joy; and I was a very happy man, as I sailed from New York, a popular and successful—I may say a famous—actor, with greater honors before me, and greater happiness awaiting me in England. I was returning home in a sort of triumph. I was already living my old life over again.

"One day, as I was pacing the deck of the steamer, a gentleman whom I had met in New York passed me, and said, 'Good morning, Mr. Romaine.' My stage name startled me queerly. It seemed unnatural, so deeply had I already plunged back into the happy past. I repeated the name over and over again, as I walked the deck; and then whispered my own name, 'Harold Ferrars.'

"Why, there is no 'Harold Ferrars'! I almost cried it aloud as the terrible fact came to my consciousness. There is no 'Harold Ferrars'! It all came out clear. Here I was returning to England to claim my fortune, to claim the hand of the girl I had loved for years, and yet I could not prove that I was Harold Ferrars! Everything that I might have used to identify myself I had lost in New York. The fire had destroyed all my personal papers, and you gentlemen had destroyed *me!*

"'But,' I said to myself, 'I can surely establish my identity by knowledge of things that only Harold Ferrars could have.'

"This thought comforted me. I began at once to recall all the events of my childhood and youth, to be prepared for the shrewd inquiries of the lawyers, and I also determined to cable you, Dr. Stendahl, as soon as I reached Liverpool, to send me an affidavit, stating that you had changed the face of Sidney Leslie in the hospital. I received your affidavit ten days later at my London hotel.

"Difficulties began for me as soon as I landed in England. I at once reassumed my own name, and registered at the hotel as 'Harold Ferrars.' The next day's papers announced my return, for the heir of an estate worth twenty thousand pounds a year is a person of importance in London, and shortly after a late breakfast the old lawyer of our family, Mr. Kennard, sent up his card. I had him brought up at once.

"'Why, how are you, Mr. Kennard? I am delighted! It's been years since I saw you,' I began; but old Kennard merely fixed me with his monocle.

"'I beg pardon,' he said; 'but I expected to see Mr. Ferrars.'

"'I am Ferrars,' I said. And then it all came back to me. I should have to convince this keen and skeptical old lawyer that the stranger before him was the boy he had known for twenty years. I assured him that I was Ferrars, and tried to tell him the whole story. But it made no effect on him, and he bowed himself out rather stiffly, saying that I must pardon his incredulity, but he did not know me, and, frankly, did not believe my story.

"It was the same everywhere. No one would accept me as Harold Ferrars. All took me for an impostor.

"I waited as patiently as I could for your affidavit, doctor; and, when it came, I took it triumphantly to Mr. Kennard. He read it. 'It is interesting,' he said, 'but does not prove that you are Harold Ferrars.' I made

him listen to my story again, but I could not shake his skepticism.

"I had not yet gone to see my sweetheart, Miss Edith Allingham. She lived in the North Country, some distance from London, and the settling up of affairs with the lawyers gave me an excuse for staying over a few days. Now, I decided to go to Edith and trust to love to recognize homely old Harold Ferrars in the Adonis face you had given him. The day I spent on my journey to her home was not a happy one. I was tormented by doubts. But all vanished when Edith rushed into the room to greet me. 'Harold!' she cried, but stopped, her face crimson. 'Pardon me, sir,' she said, drawing herself up proudly, 'they told me my—cousin was here. Please excuse me,' and she started to leave the room.

"'Edith, don't you know me? I am Harold!'

"'How dare you, sir!' and she swept out of the room.

"This was enough, and I hurried back to London. At the hotel I sent a despatch to you, doctor, asking you to look up the photographs that Dr. Danvers had taken, and to be ready to restore my old face. I took a night train to Liverpool, and the next morning was on my way to New York.

"And here I am! My old face is my fortune; love and wealth depend on it, and I want you experts to restore it for me at once!"

He was able to laugh.

"We will," said Dr. Stendahl, calmly.

We commenced at once on Ferrars. We put him in a private hospital, and began the work of restoration. My photograph of him taken before the first operation served as our guide. This second task was far more difficult than the first, as it is easier to carve down than to build up. But the great Stendahl did not have a doubt from the first flash of his knife. The cutting of flesh always inspired him.

Both nose and chin had to be restored, and I felt it was a sacrilege, as Ferrars lay on the operating-table, his

face as beautiful as that of a Greek boy, to mar the exquisite work of Dr. Stendahl. But only the novelty of the operation appealed to the famous surgeon. He had no illusions, and no ideals but those of science.

Ferrars fortunately had enough flesh on his legs to supply the needs of his nose and chin. By using this flesh, with its natural skin, we succeeded, after days of careful study and measurements, in refashioning the face until it looked exactly like the old, good-natured satyr-face of the picture, the face that the old lawyer knew and that Edith loved.

A week or so more, and we were ready, for the second time, to remove the bandages. I do not believe that Ferrars himself was more solicitous about the success of the operation than we were. As I clipped the threads and revealed, inch by inch, the chin or nose, Dr. Stendahl compared the result with the photograph, and Ferrars stared at his reflection in a hand-mirror. Finally the last strip of bandage was removed.

"My God! it is all right!" shouted Ferrars. "I won't need papers or pictures now! *That's* enough!" and he patted the reflection of his face in the glass. "How are you, old fellow?"

He was deliriously happy, and tears were in his eyes as he grasped our hands.

Dr. Stendahl smiled with serenity. "I think that face would serve as a certificate of Harold Ferrars anywhere."

Again I looked closely at the picture and at Ferrars. There was no difference; it was the same satyr-like face.

"How soon may I leave for England?" Ferrars eagerly inquired.

"At once," replied Dr. Stendahl, "if you take care of that face on the voyage."

"Then I will say good-bye now!" He was radiant.

Dr. Stendahl and I started to leave the hospital, but paused for a moment to discuss some feature of the operation that had particularly interested the great surgeon. An orderly who

knew me came up and handed me two cards.

"They are for you and Dr. Stendahl," he said.

I gave them to Dr. Stendahl without looking at them.

"John Kennard," he read, slowly, "and Miss Edith Allingham? Who are they?"

"Who?" I almost gasped. "Why, they are the lawyer and the sweetheart. They have tracked him here!"

We hastened into the reception-room. A shrewd-looking Englishman and a charming young girl advanced to meet us. The girl showed signs of grief and worry, but hope was now flying bright colors in her cheeks.

"I am John Kennard," said the old Englishman, "and this is Miss Allingham."

After we had seated ourselves, he told us about the search they were making for Harold Ferrars. When Romaine turned up in England, Mr. Kennard and Miss Allingham thought that Ferrars must be dead. The old lawyer told his story so steadily there was no checking him for explanations. "We have," he concluded, "traced Ferrars, as Sidney Leslie, to this hospital, where he was operated on by you gentlemen"—bowing to us—"and after that—nothing. He disappears."

All this time, I was nervously fingering the two photographs. I now held forward the picture I had taken of Leslie before the first operation.

"Harold!" cried Miss Allingham.

"Ferrars!" said the old lawyer.

I then held forward the picture of Romaine.

"The impostor!" cried Miss Allingham.

"The adventurer who tried to deceive us!" said the lawyer.

"This," I said, holding up the last picture, "is the famous romantic actor, Herbert Romaine, known to both of you as Harold Ferrars."

"Impossible!" cried Miss Allingham.

"This is the face of a Greek god!"

"Yes," said Dr. Stendahl, "but it is

the face we fashioned for Harold Ferrars."

"Then he wasn't an impostor?" said Miss Allingham, "and you treated him like a thief!" she cried, turning to Kennard, with tears in her eyes.

"And how did you treat him, my dear?"

Miss Allingham only colored, and turned again to us.

"Where is Mr. Ferrars—or Mr. Romaine?"

"Mr. Romaine is here," I said.

"Here!" she cried, springing to her feet again. "In this hospital? Is he ill—or hurt?"

"No," I began—and then a fear came over me that the lovely young girl would prefer the Antinous face, now that she was sure it really belonged to Ferrars. The last operation had been unnecessary! Dr. Stendahl and I looked at each other in dismay.

"I must see him at once—now!" said the girl, as the color came and went in her cheeks.

"You see," I said, glancing at Dr. Stendahl, who was even more perplexed than I, "you see, there has been another operation——"

"Take me to him at once!" cried the girl, imperiously.

"Don't be alarmed," I said. "The operation was entirely successful, and——"

"Is Dr. Stendahl still in the reception-room?" came a voice from the hall.

Mr. Kennard and Miss Allingham turned swiftly toward the door.

"It is Harold!" exclaimed the girl.

"I beg pardon," said Ferrars, as he entered and saw that others were present.

But Miss Allingham sprang forward.

"It is you!" she cried, "and not the play-actor!" And we turned away as Ferrars caught her in his arms.

"Would you not prefer the beautiful face of Romaine?" I heard him ask the girl.

"No!" she said: "not that mask—I want you!"



KHALID ALI'S PRAYER

*In Lebanon, beneath the cedar shade,
Amid the fragments of a shattered shrine,
For his soul's ease young Khalid Ali prayed
To her whom men aforesime held divine.*

O THOU that art my boon and bane,
At dawn and at the daylight's wane,
Look down upon thy worshiper
With pity for his pain!

A radiant, unplucked rose I know,
Fairer than that of Jericho,
Than any attared blossom where
The Pharpar's waters flow;

Yea, than the rarest-petaled bloom
Of Araby's oasis-loom;
Than any crimson bud that decks
The fanes of old Fayûm.

I have a tiny garden-space—
Meseems it is an empty place;
Ah, how my heart yearns there to see
This rose's peerless face!

Grant me the guerdon of this sight,
O lovely Lady of Delight,
And thine the myrtle-wreaths shall be,
And every ancient rite!

Allah will pardon me, for his
The rose's fragrant molding is;
'Twas he who shaped her eyes to hold
A dream of ecstasies;

'Twas he who wrought from foam and fire
Her lips—a vision of desire!—
Work thou this wonder, goddess, lest
Thy devotee expire!

*In Lebanon, beneath the cedar shade,
Amid the fragments of a shattered shrine,
Thus, for his soul's ease, Khalid Ali prayed
To her whom men aforesime held divine.*

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

THE SECOND MRS. NICHOLS

By Elizabeth Knight Tompkins

A FEELING very like dismay took possession of John Lawrence when, glancing at the register at Muir's on his return from his fishing trip, he saw the unmistakably familiar signature of Sturgis Nichols. To this was added, in the same handwriting, "wife and daughter." His first thought was to pack up his possessions, and get away on the early morning train. It would be sufficiently unpleasant to meet the man under any circumstances; even more painful than unpleasant to meet him with Eleanor's daughter and the wife who had taken Eleanor's place.

Robert Muir, the proprietor, was outside on the porch, with imperturbable good humor explaining the lateness of the evening mail to the fifth group that had waylaid him in his progress to the office. Lawrence beckoned him in, intending to announce that sudden business called him back to town. He had spent his vacation at Muir's for so many years now that he was considered one of themselves by the whole family, from Robert Muir, the elder, down to fat, good-natured little four-year-old Polly.

No general excuse would do; he would have to invent something detailed and plausible, and listen to the lamentations and regrets of them all, regrets with which the loss of his twelve dollars a week would have nothing to do. If it had only been the money, he reflected, he might have made it up to them; but it was beastly selfish in him to go when he hadn't been there three days, two of which had been spent off in the wilds with Bob. All Winter they had been looking forward to his coming; his in-

frequent letters had been read to pieces and valued far more than the books that accompanied them, precious as these last were. He liked to sleep out-of-doors, so, as a surprise, a large new tent with a triple roof had been bought for him, and set up in the most attractive corner of the grounds. The plans for the annex were waiting his approval, and the problems of each individual member of the family were waiting opportunity for discussion.

All these thoughts, and more like them, passed through Lawrence's mind in the minute that it took Muir to make his way around to the inner office. They did not, however, shake his resolution. To live under the same roof with Sturgis Nichols was the impossible thing. Even to meet him would be an ordeal that he would rather be spared. He was in momentary fear of hearing his step in the outer office, knowing that even after all these years he would recognize it without question. He swore under his breath at his old friend. Damn the man! He might, at least, have kept his defiling touch off this little corner of the earth, whose wild, fresh beauty had been to Lawrence a very present help in time of trouble, an alleviation of the overwhelming sorrow that Nichols had wrought in his life. Muir strolled into the little room.

"Well, Mr. Lawrence, the old place begins to look natural now that you're here," he began. This was as strong an expression of esteem and liking as Lawrence had ever heard him put into words. "You'd ought to have been here over Sunday. Lots of people were here. Some folks from the

Springs come down. I guess you know them—Sturgis Nichols and his family. He didn't like it there—too stylish for his little girl; wants a quiet place for her; she's been sick. He went off to town this morning, but left the little girl and her mother here for a month. She—the wife—ain't exactly our kind. The Springs'd suit her much better; but I guess she won't die of it."

Usually the most discreet of men, to this favored guest Muir was confidential. Lawrence hesitated. The satisfaction in his host's manner was so great that he could not bring himself to destroy it by throwing his bomb-shell. Besides, he was feeling a prospective pang of homesickness at the thought of leaving. All Winter he, too, had been looking forward to his month of freedom from the social duties, in which, against his inclination, his life with his mother and sister involved him—a month of fishing, tramping and dreaming in this glorious mountain country, among these simple, kindly, affectionate friends of his. His resolution weakened. It was not necessary that he should see anything of Mrs. Nichols and the little girl; the place was certainly big enough for them all. They had assuredly never heard his name. If Nichols were to come up again, then would be time enough for him to go. With a sigh of relief, he dismissed the subject from his mind, and fell to discussing his fishing trip with his host.

He found the subject of the Nicholoses waiting for him when he awoke at dawn the next morning. The old hatred rose in him whenever he thought of Sturgis, once his dearest friend. Sturgis had known of his love for Eleanor Farnham long before Sturgis had ever met her; nevertheless, when chance brought them together, he had not apparently hesitated. In six weeks he had won and married her. This, perhaps, Lawrence might have forgiven in time, knowing the irresistible mutual attraction the natures of those two would have; but there had been other offenses not to be pardoned. He

had feared their coming together so strongly that he had rarely spoken of one to the other. He had felt this instinctively, in spite of his arguments that Eleanor's lack of positive physical beauty would be a safeguard with a beauty-worshipping nature like his friend's. He had tried to persuade himself that her lack of conspicuous external attractions would blind Sturgis to her great beauty of mind and spirit.

There were two things for which he could not forgive him. When Eleanor's little daughter was born, she had only just escaped death. Lawrence's mother reported to him the doctor's decree that she would never live through the birth of another child. Three years later, she had died in childbirth. Less than a year after her death, Sturgis had married again, a beautiful young girl of, so they said, little or no education, and of the most ordinary antecedents. It was for these offenses that Lawrence cherished a resentment which never grew less. He felt positively vindictive whenever he thought of Sturgis; he longed to make him suffer in some way. To steal the one woman in the world was bad enough, even if he had cherished her tenderly and remembered her long.

There was no sign of the new-comers in the dining-room when Lawrence breakfasted; but, as he crossed the old-fashioned, apple-shaded croquet lawn on his way to his tent, he saw a little girl knocking the balls about, whom he would have known to be Sturgis's daughter if her coming had been unannounced. He had decided with relief that she had not a look of her mother, when the child glanced shyly up at him, and smiled. Lawrence's heart gave a big thump of mingled pain and pleasure, the smile was so unmistakably Eleanor's.

He hurried off to his tent, and sat down on the edge of the bed, overcome by an intensity of feeling that surprised himself. Why did the thing persist so? It was not natural. Other men got over things, so why shouldn't he? He would not feel any more. He

was tired of feeling. Surely a man with a strong will like his need not be dominated in that fashion, if he did not indulge himself. He had been to blame; he had been weak; he had regretted and dreamed when he should have been living and working. It was absurd for a man to conclude that his life was over at twenty-seven because the woman he happened to fancy married his best friend; and to persist in that delusion for eight years was worse than absurd; it was criminal. There should be a radical change. He would not waste what was left to him of youth. Other men loved and married at thirty-five, and he would do the same. He sprang to his feet and, rejecting his fishing-rod as a tempting device of the evil one, he grasped his walking-stick and, paying a hasty call to his devoted friend, Sing, the Chinese cook, in quest of some lunch, he started off for a long tramp. That day, at least, there should be no dreaming.

He was the last of the boarders to come in to dinner that evening, to find, however, a pleasant little meal kept hot and fresh for him. There were still people left in the room. At a table in the opposite corner sat a woman he had never seen. By her youth and beauty, her startling, unmistakable beauty, he knew that she must be the second Mrs. Nichols. Their eyes met over the heads of the other boarders; a look of intelligence crept into hers. Evidently, she recognized his difference from the rest of the good people who filled the house. He coldly averted his eyes. Nevertheless, he cast many stolen glances at her during the few minutes she remained in the dining-room. Her beauty fascinated him and, against his will, it occurred to him that if ever a man had an excuse for being inconstant—he checked his thought before he finished it. The memory of Eleanor's great mental and spiritual beauty came to him with a freshness that it had not had for some time. It was impossible that the soul of the second Mrs. Nichols should equal her face; spiritual beauty is attained only by discipline, and what discipline

does the world hold for a woman fashioned as she was? It, the world, always takes its revenge for preëminence in anything; in the case of great physical beauty, by the denial of the training which alone can form a character to match. He sought in vain for a flaw; face, figure, carriage were alike without blemish. At last, he irritably fell back on the perfection of her toilette. Though simple, as befitted the homeliness of Muir's, it betrayed too much thought, it was too complete; the hair was too carefully arranged. No woman who dressed so well as that could possibly have anything else in her head.

For some days, this furtive examination went on. As Muir had said, Mrs. Nichols was evidently very much out of her element. At all events, she did not seem to find any of the commonplace, second-rate women who frequented Muir's at all to her taste, not betraying, herself, in either look or manner the humble origin of which he had heard. Instead, she suggested a swan that had strayed into a barnyard by mistake. She held herself aloof, and occupied herself with the little Eleanor, who, to Lawrence's surprise, had no nurse.

He felt an intense curiosity as to the relations of the two, and, himself unseen, often watched them as they played croquet together. Mrs. Nichols knew even less about the game than her stepdaughter, and submitted to be taught and corrected good-naturedly.

Although their relations were friendly, they seemed to talk little. There was evidently a reserve between them, possibly born of an insurmountable difference of nature. Eleanor seemed to hold herself aloof from the other children very much as her stepmother did from their mothers. To this Alec Muir was the only exception; to this freckled-faced, snub-nosed little natural-born gentleman alone was she genial. Him she let lead her about on Jolly, the small ex-circus pony which Lawrence had given to the Muir children; with him she played fearful

and wonderful duets on the old piano, and interminable games of croquet. She was a serious, thoughtful, sensitive child, with a look of delicacy that made Lawrence anxious, in spite of his determination not to let himself get interested in her.

Mrs. Nichols took the greatest care of the child in all material ways, a care which, to Lawrence's jealous watchfulness, seemed to spring from a sense of duty rather than from love. He decided that the woman's nature was utterly cold; for, to his partial eyes, Eleanor's little daughter was the most lovable child he had ever seen. He carefully avoided any direct contact with her, dreading the effect of her smiles, a course which puzzled and disappointed his small friend Alec, who had never before sought sympathy from him and found it lacking. He had the further reason for keeping the child at a distance, in that from the first an indistinct purpose was growing in his mind, and he wished to avoid all opposing influences.

Mrs. Nichols was so bored that a disinterested person would have been sorry for her. She evidently had few mental resources, and at Muir's there was no public worthy of her careful toilettes.

Lawrence resolved to make her acquaintance, and to make himself agreeable to her in the evenings after Eleanor had gone to bed. He would stop at no amount of flattery to compass his end—an end which he never defined accurately to himself. He went no further than a determination to alienate her still more from her husband than, he felt sure, her coldness had already done. She would certainly not be able to appreciate her husband's uncommonness, and Sturgis was not a man to forgive coldness in a woman—he was so vividly alive himself. He would, besides, have the memory of Eleanor's passionate intensity of feeling.

Here, Lawrence's thoughts shrank hurriedly away. He had never dared face the thought of what the love-making between those two must have been. And yet Sturgis could replace her with a beautiful doll!

He modified his opinion after he had talked with Mrs. Nichols a few times. Whatever her failings might be—and they were evidently many—she was not a doll. At first, she held back a little, to punish him, Lawrence felt, for his lack of eagerness in making her acquaintance; but her need of companionship was greater than her wounded vanity, and she was soon as ready to make friends as he could wish her to be. An unreserved person, even for her scant twenty-one years, he was soon in possession of all the facts of her simple history, which, instead of representing a succession of small triumphs, as he had pictured it to himself, had been humble and monotonous in the extreme.

"But I don't see why you are so bored here, for you must have become used to having nothing happen in all those years at Parkersville," he remarked, one day when she had been telling him of her young-girl life.

"But I was always expecting something interesting to happen then, and now I know it won't," she explained. "Besides, I had to work. I had to cook and clean, and I made all our clothes, my mother's and the girls', as well as my own, and in those days I used to read."

"But I never see you with a book in your hand. I didn't know you knew how," Lawrence protested, with an impertinence he affected, having found it effective in his relations with women. "What sort of things did you read?" he asked, with eager interest, without waiting for an answer.

"Everything I could get hold of. I was always reading."

"But why, then, did you give it up?"

Mrs. Nichols hesitated a moment. "What was the use? No matter how much I read, I never seemed to read to as good purpose as some other people. What's the use of reading if you don't say what people want you to about books—if you like the wrong kind?"

This was ambiguous, but Lawrence, having the key, understood. His companion continued her words rushing

out as if it were a relief to speak them. "What's the use of reading, any way! I don't believe in education; it just makes people stuck-up. If Eleanor were my daughter, she shouldn't go to school a day."

"You don't really think that," Lawrence said, reprovingly. "You have sacrificed things all your life to educate yourself."

"But it isn't just learning what you yourself find in books," she broke forth, impatiently. "People expect you to have learned just the things they did from them, to have just the same opinions. I am not going to read any more; it doesn't do any good. I am going to be myself, just as I am; and, if they don't like it—well, it is nothing to me."

"Do you think I am what you call stuck-up?" Lawrence asked.

"Not a speck. That's what I like about you," she answered, heartily.

"And yet I have had an unusually good education, and I have read a vast amount in several languages."

"Oh, if people were like you, if they weren't always comparing one with other people, there would be some use trying," she exclaimed.

She was certainly a transparent soul, this second Mrs. Nichols, quite different from his expectations. Greatly to his surprise, he did not find her vain, preoccupied with her own charms. Her skill in putting herself together seemed to be a matter of instinct rather than thought. Although perfectly aware of her own beauty, she was not "stuck on it," as she herself would have expressed it. It was some little time before it dawned on him how clever she must be to have raised herself so far above the environment in which she was born. This idea came only after he understood fully the conditions of her early life.

Lawrence at first disbelieved her when she confided to him that her mother could neither read nor write. He understood perfectly the discouragement of her present attitude. After seeming to herself to have achieved so much, it must have been inconceiv-

ably disheartening to have been elevated into an atmosphere in which all her little achievements were taken as a matter of course, and the things she did not know made of importance—shadowy, intangible things whose significance she could not grasp. If the "they" she talked about had only realized it, what she had already made of herself proved conclusively that all things were possible to her.

Her intimacy with Lawrence progressed rapidly. Mrs. Nichols was evidently in a dangerous mood, and ready to welcome any distraction. Her mind was a battle-ground for the evil forces of ennui, discouragement, a sense of ill usage and a desire to "get even" with somebody. Lawrence felt that she would go very far, perhaps to the limit, if by so doing she could make her husband suffer. And yet it was without a pang of conscience that he gradually introduced a new note into their intercourse. He was pleased that this was spontaneous on his part—it would have been a bore to affect a feeling; but the woman interested him, keenly. Far from being cold, she was hot-headed, impulsive, passionate. She would have been attractive even without her wonderful beauty, which was so great a delight to his eyes that he would have sacrificed many things for the pleasure of looking at her. Being made love to was evidently so little of a novelty that she recognized the thing even in the delicate guise in which Lawrence offered it—recognized, but did not repulse. It seemed to him that she rather encouraged it than otherwise. This surprised Lawrence, since Sturgis was not there to see, for he could not flatter himself that she cared for him other than as a companion and sympathetic listener. In his concerns, she took little interest, her own were so absorbing, hardly asking him a question, and taking him for granted in a way that was anything but complimentary. Consequently, he was startled when, one day, she rushed into the middle of things, by asking:

"You haven't much money, have you?"

"What makes you think that?" he asked.

"I should think you would go to a more expensive place," she answered, frankly.

"But you are here, and you are apparently not limited as to your dress-makers' bills," he retorted.

"But that is on Eleanor's account. The doctor wanted her to come to a quiet place where there would be no excitement, and he didn't want her to have a nurse—though I believe they put him up to that."

"Whom do you mean by 'they'?" he asked.

"Oh, Mr. Nichols—Sturgis, I mean," she corrected herself, evidently according to previous lessons. Then, as an afterthought, remembering her determination not to profit by her instructions, she repeated: "Mr. Nichols and Eleanor's grandmother and aunt, Mrs. Farnham and Janet."

"But what was their object?" Lawrence inquired.

"Oh, they thought I'd get fonder of her if I took care of her. That was why they sent her home. She lived at her grandmother's when we were first married."

"How can you help loving her!" he exclaimed, forgetting his rôle of being always on her side. They were sitting near the big lantern hung at the corner of the porch, and by its light he saw the interesting, inscrutable glance that his companion gave him out of her wonderful, dark-blue eyes.

"She is too precious for me to love," she said, with a touch of pique in her voice. "They tried to make me take her abroad with Mrs. Farnham and Janet, but I wouldn't do that. I won't be fond of people to order, and I am tired of being improved."

Lawrence suppressed the comment that rose to his lips. Mrs. Nichols broke the pause that followed.

"But tell me, have you any money?"

"Enough for my needs, certainly."

"But would you have enough if you gave up your work?"

"Yes; I'd have enough for myself and for others, if I never saw the inside of

my office again. But why do you ask? Are you planning to run away with me?" He asked this last question seriously, not as if it were a jest. Mrs. Nichols's frankness was wonderful. It pleased always in the end, though it sometimes startled him at first. Now she said:

"I might do worse. You are not always criticising me and comparing me to other people. And then you would love me. You are in love with me, are you not?"

Although he had no idea of carrying things to the extreme of running away with her, Lawrence would have given a great deal to utter his lie promptly and convincingly; but the word stuck in his throat, and, when he did finally bring it out, it sounded false in his own ears.

"You don't!" she exclaimed. "I have believed that you did. Why else would you like me just as I am? I thought you loved me because you weren't always trying to correct and form me."

"Ah, my child, if that were not the proof of love!" he exclaimed, the words forced from him against his will. "But you don't love me," he declared, quickly, to cover his last remark.

"No; but I haven't tried to make you think I did. That's what puzzles me. I wonder what was your object," she added, contemplatively. "A great many men have made love to me, even since I was married, but they have always meant it. I never before had one pretend he did."

"But how do you know that I don't?" Lawrence asked, boldly.

"Oh, I have felt it all along, but I wouldn't let myself see it; there seemed no reason for you to pretend."

Robert Muir had been strolling down the porch, and Mrs. Nichols had to lower her voice so that he should not hear her last remark. Lawrence had noticed him hovering in the background for several nights; evidently, this intimacy made his honest soul uneasy; it was so unlike Lawrence to devote himself to one woman. Now he stopped and, leaning against a post,

made some remark about the temperature. Lawrence was not sorry for the interruption.

The next afternoon, after luncheon, he was sitting in the shadow of his tent with an old brown-leather letter-case on his knee, writing a letter in pencil to his mother, when Mrs. Nichols came across the lawn, and joined him.

"Eleanor is taking a nap, and I am so bored," she explained, sitting down on the edge of the hammock that was swung between two tall, yellow pines.

"But I want to finish my letter," protested Lawrence, afraid that she would renew the conversation of the night before.

"No, you don't," she exclaimed, leaning over and taking his portfolio from him. He was interested to notice that, before she did this, she glanced about to see if any one were in sight. In her raw, country-girl state, she would have done it as a matter of course. The paper was held by a clasp.

"Let me read your letter. I like to see how men write to their mothers; it tells you a lot," she said. There was a marked change in her manner, which was more girl-like than he had ever seen it. She called herself bored, but she had never seemed less so.

"No one but a mother could possibly read so stupid a letter," he replied.

"Have you told her about me?" she asked.

"I have not," he answered, with decision.

"I see no reason why you shouldn't," she returned, defiantly, answering his tone. "Let me glance through your portfolio. It looks old and interesting. I am sure it would amuse me," she went on, without waiting for him to reply.

The case had belonged to Lawrence's father, and he had used it from boyhood. Between two of the many leaves of thin, pink blotting-paper, covered with the facsimiles of different handwritings, lay three or four letters of Eleanor's. Lawrence remembered this, but felt that the chances were slight of the second Mrs. Nichols knowing the handwriting of the first. Besides, he

did not care. He felt reckless, realizing that there was no use in attempting to deceive this clear-sighted young woman as to the depth of his feeling for her. The game was practically up.

For some minutes, she amused herself by turning over, one by one, the thin leaves of old-fashioned blotting-paper. She read a prescription that lay between two, examined a business-card, some clippings and various memoranda. He had not expected her to be so thorough; there was no doubt that she would find the letters. This she did presently. There were four of them, fastened together with an elastic band. The top one was addressed in Eleanor's firm, beautiful handwriting to John Lawrence, Esq. Mrs. Nichols shot a quick, startled glance at him.

"Why, these are from—!" she began, in a tone of great surprise.

"From Eleanor Farnham," he finished for her.

"You knew her, then?"

"Naturally."

"Knew her well?"

"Very well."

"You were in love with her?"

"I was."

"Perhaps you are still?"

"God help me, I believe I am," he answered, fervently. Mrs. Nichols looked as if she would like to ask further questions, but the sincere feeling in his tone checked her.

"I don't understand it," she began, instead; "her wonderful charm, I mean. I have seen her pictures, and they are really quite plain."

"And are looks the only beauty?" Lawrence exclaimed, indignantly, resenting the criticism.

"Not to me," she answered, gently. "But I thought they were to men—at least, I used to think so," she corrected herself.

"Eleanor Farnham was the most wonderful person I have ever known," he asserted, with indignation still evident in his voice.

Mrs. Nichols sat bolt upright on the edge of the hammock, clutching the sides with her hands, and letting the portfolio slip to the ground. The old

elastic band broke, and Eleanor's precious letters were strewn on the grass.

"How I hate her!" she exclaimed, with a startling intensity of manner, her blue eyes growing black with feeling. In the midst of the emotional excitement that any mention of Eleanor stirred up in him, Lawrence found time to notice the strange beauty of her face under stress of strong feeling, and to wonder that he could ever have supposed her cold. A thought seemed to strike her, in the interest of which she lost a little of her rigidity.

"And do you hate Sturgis?" she demanded.

"I do," he answered, simply.

"You know him, then?"

"He was the best friend I ever had—except her, and he stole her from me."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, in a tone of deep comprehension, evidently grasping the whole situation and interpreting it aright. "But you are not a bad sort of man," she continued, "so how you must have loved her! No better than Sturgis, though. You can imagine what a position I am in, I who love him," she added, more calmly.

"And doesn't he love you?" Lawrence asked, forgetting his own emotions in the interest of hers.

"In a way, yes; a most humiliating way. He loves my beauty, but what I am myself is nothing to him. It is this that makes me so mad," she continued. "I often think I could forgive him more easily if he didn't care anything at all for me. You see, he can't get over it that I don't know Greek and things, that I am not well educated, as she was. He wants women to know a lot of things."

"How you mistake him!" Lawrence's sense of justice forced him to exclaim.

"How do you mean?" she asked, eagerly.

"Sturgis Nichols is not a man to care an atom about unessentials like that. You don't understand at all. Listen to me! Will you have some naked truth? Can you stand it?"

"Try, and see," she replied.

"Very well, then. If you don't like

it, you can cut my acquaintance. Where you disappoint Sturgis is not so much on the mental as on the moral side. You see, I know him so well that I know just how certain things in you must affect him. You have hinted several times that he does not care about hearing your opinions. The reason for this is that they are seldom perfectly sincere. You often, from perversity, say things that you do not mean, or because you think they sound well, or for no reason at all, just because they come into your head. Now, a man with a mind like Sturgis's cannot make friends with a woman who cannot be trusted to be always sincere. He would not care if your opinions were wrong-headed, if they were honest opinions. And then, you are not generous. I know Mrs. Farnham and Janet, and know what kind, good women they are. It is wonderful the way they have accepted you, worshipping Eleanor as they do. Your attitude seems perfectly unjustifiable to me. And, then, no man could overlook the way you have let your jealousy get the better of you in regard to little Eleanor, no man who had lived with a thoroughly generous, large-souled woman. Of course, there are men whom experience has taught to expect nothing better of women, and, if you had married one of these, you would have had an easier time of it."

There was no anger, only tears in the girl's eyes, as she asked, with touching simplicity: "Do you think Sturgis would love me, really love me, if I were better—large-minded and all that?"

"I know he would," Lawrence answered, with conviction; "not immediately, but in time. If you were to make yourself large-minded, and drop this trick of being insincere—for it is only a surface matter—no man on earth could help loving you."

"But what can I do?" she asked, appealingly.

"For one thing, you must never express an opinion without asking yourself if you really, in your heart of hearts, think it. Then you must stop brooding over your grievances. You

must shut the little door in your mind whenever you remember your wrongs. No matter if they really are wrongs, you cannot afford to let yourself remember them—it does yourself too much harm. You must never be obstinate. Then you must learn more control of your moods and feelings. You must learn to smile when you feel cross, and not to mention it when you are tired or headachy.”

“Why do you tell me this?” she asked, earnestly, without any resentment at what he inwardly called his outrageous frankness. “Don’t you see that if Sturgis comes to love me, it will make him happy as well as I?”

Lawrence hesitated.

“I suppose one does not become a villain all at once,” he explained. “My efforts have usually been on the side of good, and habit is strong.”

Mrs. Nichols gave him a keen glance.

“You hated Sturgis for forgetting her, and now you resent it that he hasn’t. You would like to have her memory all to yourself, to be the only one who has been faithful to her.”

Lawrence’s eyes were cast on the ground; he did not answer. “Ain’t—I am I not right?” she asked.

“Yes, quite right,” he answered, humbly. “I am a fine person to be preaching to you. Forget what I said.”

“No, I won’t. It was perfectly true. I am going to remember it, and profit by it,” she answered, heartily, rising from the hammock. The door of her room had opened, and a little night-gowned, bare-footed figure appeared on the porch. Before the door closed again, Lawrence saw Mrs. Nichols gather the child up in her arms and kiss her. The thought came to him of how hard it must have been for her not to love the child.

She greeted him with a smile when he joined her on the porch that evening.

“You have made me so much happier by showing me that there was something definite I could do. Do you know, I wrote down everything

you said in a little book. I was afraid I might forget something.”

It was not long before she was telling him the whole of her acquaintance with Sturgis, its singular beginning, and the sudden growth of love between them. Her happiness had lasted but a little while, for she had soon realized that his sorrow had been only temporarily smothered, that he was comparing her to the woman he had lost and, finding her wanting, was suffering remorse for his own inconstancy.

“He could not forgive me, because I had made him forget her even for a short time,” she explained. She asked Lawrence many things about Eleanor that she had always wanted to know, but had been too proud to ask. He had never before been able to stand hearing her name spoken; but now, to his surprise, he found himself talking about her freely and feeling relief, even pleasure, in doing it. The second Mrs. Nichols listened, eagerly.

“And though she was so fine, she was so gloriously human, so entirely feminine. She had such a keen sense of humor, and was a companion for one’s jolly moods as well as one’s sad ones. And there was nothing you could not tell her, nothing she could not understand. She was never shocked at anything,” he concluded.

“I wonder if you would mind my asking you something?” the second Mrs. Nichols said, hesitatingly.

“You can ask me anything you wish.”

“I wanted to know how it happened that she did not care for you.”

“Who knows?” Lawrence answered, adding: “I suppose the true reason was that I was younger than she in everything, even in years. She had known me since I was a boy, and had made me, as it were. Besides being older, Sturgis was much more mature for his age. And then she had such a strong spiritual side to her nature, and she could not reconcile herself to my lack of it; it was the one thing in which she could never influence me. This was one reason why I was always afraid of her knowing Sturgis. I knew

how deeply they would be in sympathy there. You know he feels, or used to feel, that he knew things beyond the teachings of his senses, and so did she."

"And do you think they really do?" his companion asked, in a hushed voice. They had risen to avoid a laughing group that was coming along the porch, and had moved on toward the door of Mrs. Nichols's room.

"How should I know?" he answered. "There may be a spiritual sense that is as definite an attribute as an imagination, and I may lack it and be as little conscious of my lack as many unimaginative people are of theirs. It is a subject I puzzle about indefinitely."

"We will talk of it again," she said, holding out her hand.

Once Lawrence had become used to little Eleanor's presence, it ceased to pain him, becoming instead a great pleasure. He found himself loving the child to a degree that alarmed him, knowing as he did that any intercourse with her would be impossible after they returned to town. He thought of her constantly, and craved her company, her innocent little caresses, the quaint, precocious wisdom of her talk. Mrs. Nichols no longer fought her love for the child, but showed it frankly, to Eleanor's wondering amazement at first, but also to her great delight. It was a continual joy to Lawrence to see them together. He and Eleanor became the greatest of friends. She was not strong enough to walk far, so he took her for rides on Jolly, himself walking beside her. Jolly had his idiosyncrasies; he was as obstinate as a mule, but, if his views and your own happened to coincide, no pony could have been more desirable. He was as strong as a horse, and too proud to show emotion under any conceivable circumstances.

There was no talk of Nichols's coming up for the first fortnight of the stay. Then he announced his arrival for the following Saturday night, to stay until Monday night. At the time Mrs. Nichols gave Lawrence this information, she also told him that she had

written her husband not to come. Eleanor was very well, and it was too long a journey for so short a stay.

"And are you sure he won't come?" Lawrence asked, anxiously.

"Sure. It is more a sense of duty than anything else that brings him. Fond as he is of Eleanor, he can get along perfectly well without her, or he wouldn't have suggested my taking her to Europe. Besides, our relations have been decidedly strained of late, and he likes to stay at the Farnhams' and pretend he's been faithful to—her." She spoke bitterly, and Lawrence did not blame her; hers was an odious situation.

Saturday afternoon, Lawrence took Eleanor for a ride, the longest they had ever taken. They went to the top of Deer Creek trail and, coming home by an old wood path, they struck into the country road. There on the way-side, they met Mrs. Nichols, the immaculate Mrs. Nichols, ploughing her way through the dust, her hat on one side and her embroidered linen gown tucked up under one arm, looking warm and disheveled as he had never seen her, and lugging a big watermelon, hugged close to her breast. When she saw them, she sat down on a convenient stump by the roadside, and began to laugh. Eleanor gave a cry of joy.

"Watermelon! Oh, goody!" she exclaimed. "I love watermelon better than anything on earth," she explained to Lawrence.

"That was why I went for it. Alec told me they had some bully ones at the Smiths'," Mrs. Nichols remarked, giving the child an affectionate glance. Lawrence had never liked her so well as at that moment. "But of all impossible things to carry!" she continued. "I have dropped it half-a-dozen times."

He laughed heartily at the incongruity between her elegance of costume and general fine-lady air, and her burden. Then he took the melon from her, and she and Eleanor laughed all the way home at his efforts to keep from dropping it. Alec saw them com-

ing, and gave a whoop of joy. In a second, the lawn was swarming with children. Mrs. Nichols disappeared in the kitchen, and reappeared with a pile of plates and forks.

It was later than usual that evening when she joined Lawrence on the porch, with an anxious expression on her face announcing that she could not stay. "I am afraid there was something the matter with that watermelon," she explained. "Eleanor seems ill, and so does the little Lewis boy and Polly Muir. I didn't eat any, but Mrs. Lewis did, and she has queer feelings, too."

An hour later, the whole house was in commotion. All the children who had eaten the watermelon were more or less ill, Eleanor and Polly Muir seriously so. There was no doctor nearer than Castleton, eight miles away. Lawrence, with a heavy heart, volunteered to ride over for him, for it would be between three and four hours before the doctor could get there, and who knew what might not happen within that time?

As he went to the stable to saddle old John, a thought struck him. It was less than five miles by the railroad; if he could go that way, he might reach Castleton in time for the doctor to catch the evening train, which was almost invariably late. Next, he remembered the three high trestles. The thing was impossible; he could not get his horse over those, nor around them.

Here the remembrance of Jolly flashed into his mind—Jolly, who could go up-stairs, and cross a creek on stepping-stones without wetting so much as the tips of his hoofs. To be sure, it was a great risk; if Jolly refused the trestle, he would be miles out of his way, with nothing to do but to come back and start again, or to go forward on foot. Or if, by some chance, the train should be on time, he might meet it on one of those long trestles, or, even if it were late, a freight-train might possibly have the track. He stood a moment in indecision, but the memory of Eleanor's moans came to him, and it

was Jolly's bridle he took down from the wall.

All the rest of Lawrence's life, he dreamed at intervals of crossing high railroad trestles with the whistle of coming trains in his ears. This night the track-bed was rough, but Jolly was careful and sure-footed. At the first trestle, two miles away from Muir's, Lawrence dismounted. The track curved away in front of him into an abyss whose darkness the feeble glimmer of light in his lantern made only the more visible. He could see but a step or two in front of him. Beyond was impenetrable blackness. He remembered the horrors that had assailed him when he had crossed this abyss once in broad daylight. It was a terrible moment. It took all his resolution to make the first step off the solid ground. For a minute, in the intensity of his own dread, he hardly remembered Jolly and his probable objections. The little fellow tugged at his bridle, and refused to stir. Lawrence tried coaxing; he tried the whip. All was of no use, and the precious moments were flying. He was not a praying man, but it was something very like a prayer that he uttered.

"Oh, God, what shall I do!" he exclaimed.

He dropped the bridle. He would go forward on foot. It would take less time than to go back, and Jolly must take care of himself. The doctor would miss the train, of course, but he could drive over by the road. He started on, careless of what became of the pony, forgetting him, indeed, intent only on not making a misstep. A protesting neigh attracted his attention; he heard steps behind him, careful, accurately placed steps. Jolly was following him. He waited a minute, and the little fellow came up with him, with a whinny of joy at having found him again. It was slow moving; Jolly was extremely cautious about setting down his feet, and four were much more difficult to manage than two; it was wonderful that he could do it at all.

On and on they went into the blackness, Lawrence's heart standing still at

every sound; his whole being tense; everything forgotten except the placing of his feet and the whistle that meant death for him and faithful little Jolly. The first trestle was passed, and the worst; a stretch of track and then another trestle, much shorter than the first. Safely over this there would be plain sailing until they reached the railway-bridge, spanning the river on the near side of Castleton.

Two-thirds of the way across the second trestle, the dreaded sound broke the stillness. After a terrible moment, Lawrence realized that he himself could get over. Could Jolly be made to hurry? He grasped the pony's bridle, and urged him forward. It was of no use; he could not impart a sense of danger to him, could not make him relax the deliberate accuracy of each step. It was as if he were crossing the trestle to slow music to which he felt it necessary to keep time. The whistle came from up the track, so Lawrence noticed after his first agonized moment of suspense; at least, it was not the up train. If he and Jolly were spared, he might still reach the doctor's house in time. Fortunately, he knew just where it was.

The train rumbled on to the far end of the trestle, and Jolly was still some deliberate steps from the end. Lawrence threw the bridle back over the pony's head, and himself ran the rest of the way, forgetting his fear of falling in his more terrible fear of being overtaken by the train. He sank down beside the track, his legs half over the bank, his lantern falling from his arm into a thicket of hazel-bushes. He buried his face in his arms, and closed his ears with his fingers. The train came lumbering off the trestle, and lurched by with a deafening noise. It was disappearing around the curve, when Lawrence felt a cold, wet touch on his forehead. Jolly had come up unheard and unhurt, perfectly undisturbed by the closeness of his call. It took more than a freight-train and a trestle fifty feet high to disturb Jolly's equanimity.

In a moment, Lawrence was up and

they were off, all his thoughts on the dreadful ordeal of the railway-bridge. It seemed to him afterward that all the fear in his life was concentrated in the five minutes that it took to cross it. It was not death that he was afraid of; life had not so much to offer him that he cared for that; it was the horror that he would have to endure before death should come as a merciful release. Half-way across, his lantern, which had been growing dimmer for some time, went out, and he made the rest of the way across in the darkness of the moonless night.

At last it was over, and Jolly was tearing through the silent streets of the little town. There was no light in the doctor's house. Lawrence rang a frantic peal at the bell and, not contented with this, banged on the panels of the door with his bare fists, taking the skin off his knuckles, though he did not know it until later. The doctor stuck his head out of a front window.

"What the devil's the matter?" he called out, in his big voice.

"It is John Lawrence, from Muir's. A lot of children there are ill from eating watermelon, perhaps dying by this time. The train hasn't whistled yet. You can get it. They'll stop at Muir's for you."

"Half a minute," the doctor called back. A few seconds later, the hoarse whistle of an engine broke through the stillness. Footsteps were heard on the stairs inside, and the door was burst open. A figure in trousers and shoes, with a coat and leather bag in its hand, rushed into the street.

"Where's your horse?" he demanded. Lawrence had Jolly ready. The big man mounted, and was out of sight in the darkness before Lawrence could do anything but ask:

"Have you medicine with you?"

"Where do you think I've been practising—next door to a drug-store?" the big man called back, in good-humored sarcasm.

Lawrence ran down the three blocks that separated the doctor's house from the station. While still a block away, he saw a big man with a leather bag,

but without a coat, swing himself up on the last platform of the train that was just pulling out. On the station platform was Jolly, daintily pawing at the doctor's coat with his paw, as if about to do some trick with it. Lawrence had his lantern refilled at the station, and rode home through the woods, the doctor's coat across his pommel.

It was one in the morning before he reached Muir's. All seemed quiet, and a dread of finding out what had happened made him check Jolly's steps. But Robert Muir was watching for him.

"All safe," he said, without waiting to be asked. "Polly got better after you left, but the little Nichols girl has been dreadful sick. She'd have died if the doctor hadn't got here when he did. He knew just what to do; he always does. But what did you take Jolly for? And I'll be blamed if I see how you got there before the train left. I've been puzzling over it ever since I've had time to think about anything."

"I rode down the track," Lawrence explained, wearily. He hated, even now, to think of that ride.

Muir stared at him in amazement. "Lord God of Israel!" he exclaimed. "And Jolly went across them trestles and the railway-bridge?"

"Like a little trump. But where is the doctor?"

"In the little girl's room." Muir called something else after him, but what it was Lawrence did not hear. He went across the lawn and up on the porch to the half-open door, out of which a dim light was shining. Eleanor was asleep in the bed; her step-mother was seated beside her. To the right of the door stood the doctor, in a remarkable costume of night-shirt and trousers, his bushy hair standing up all over his head. The buttons were off his night-shirt, and his big, hairy chest was bare. Beside him, talking to him in a low voice, stood Lawrence's old friend, Sturgis Nichols, the man who had been to him more than any other. The eyes of the two met.

"John!" Nichols exclaimed, in a tone

that expressed affection, regret for the past and a plea for forgiveness as no long speech could have done.

"Nick!" Lawrence answered, calling him by the old name. Their hands met. All the anger in Lawrence's heart had gone; he was conscious of no desire so strong as to be friends again with this man who, for all his errors, had a warmth, a fullness of life and thought in him that made other men seem colorless and insignificant.

The next morning, Lawrence awoke suddenly. The sun was just rising over the top of the pine-covered mountains and, in the door of his tent, with the glory behind him, stood Sturgis Nichols. He was fully dressed.

"I couldn't sleep, so I got up hours ago," he explained. "How glorious this air is! I have just been seeing the doctor off on the early train. Eleanor is all right. I tell you, John, that man's a trump. He deserves a bigger berth."

"Bigger than being the mainstay of a whole county?" Lawrence demanded. But Nichols's attention had wandered.

"May I come in?" he asked.

"To be sure," Lawrence answered. Nichols sat down on the foot of the bed, resting his feet on the rungs of the only chair, which was occupied by Lawrence's clothes.

"John," he began; then paused. He laid his arms on the back of the chair. "John," he began again; then laid his head on his arms, evidently unable to go on.

"Why do we need to say anything?" Lawrence asked, trying to keep his voice unmoved. "I understand. I have always understood. But there is one thing I do want to talk to you about, Nick," he went on, hurriedly.

"What is that?" asked Nichols, raising his head.

"It is about your wife. You are making a great mistake, committing a sin, I might say. You are ruining a fine nature, turning all the good in it to evil." He paused, and then began again: "Nick."

"Yes," Nichols answered.

"You have got to let the other thing

go. You have got to forget—Eleanor, and love your wife. It is your manifest duty, and no one would be harder on you for neglecting it than Eleanor herself, if she could know. That poor girl is breaking her heart about you.”

“I did not know that,” Nichols said, quietly, though his friend could hear the suppressed emotion in his tones.

“There is nothing you cannot make of her, if you love her,” Lawrence went on. “She is capable of all things, and, Nick, not even Eleanor could love better than she can.”

“But, if you only knew—” Nichols began.

“I do know. I have been observing her closely. I know all her deficiencies, and I assure you they are of no importance. But you can never do anything with her unless you make up your mind to let the past go.”

Nichols raised his head again, and looked his friend intently in the face. “And leave Eleanor to you at last?” he asked, quietly.

“Yes,” Lawrence answered, softly, “leave her memory to me. I am not blaming you when I say that you have no longer any right to it.”

“You have every right to blame me,” said Nichols. “But, oh, John, I was wild with pain! I would have done anything to ease it for a little.”

“I know,” Lawrence sympathized. “But you can forget now if you will let yourself. Your wife is charming and very beautiful, the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and she loves you as beautiful women can rarely love, with the whole of her, body and soul.”

“Are you sure of that?” Nichols asked, without being able to keep the gratification out of his tone.

“As sure as that you are sitting there. Go to her now. Tell her that you have done wrong, that you are going to let the past go, and begin again. Go to her, and find out for yourself if I do not speak the truth.”

“I did not know that she understood, or that anything but her vanity was hurt,” Nichols remarked, meditatively.

“She understands everything, and so well that a little more of this sort of thing will drive her straight to the devil, and she won’t lack chances, either.”

At the significance in his tone, Nichols gave him a quick, inquiring glance. Lawrence made up his mind to tell him the truth.

“Listen to me, Nick,” he said, seriously. “It is just as well you should know this. It would have taken very little urging on my part to make your wife run away with me, not loving me in the least. She told me frankly that she cared for nothing on earth but you; and, you know, other men will not be so unmoved as I.”

Nichols rose to his feet, an expression of determination on his face.

“I will go to her now,” he said. At the door of the tent, he stopped, standing there in a blaze of early morning sunshine, a fine figure of a man. The old familiar thought passed through Lawrence’s mind, leaving a pang behind it, as it always did, that it would be an unnatural woman who could help loving him.

“So you have won, at last!” Nichols said.

“Yes,” Lawrence answered; “Eleanor is mine at last. Your thoughts should be elsewhere.”



NEVER SATISFIED

BRIDE (*of three weeks, to husband*)—Does ’oo love wifey as much as ’oo used to?
HUSBAND (*fervently*)—More, Duckums, much, much more.

BRIDE (*bursting into tears*)—I always knew you didn’t love me as much as you used to say you did!

NOT HIS FAULT

By Tom Masson

M R. AND MRS. WHIFFLETON had now returned from their honeymoon—that cloudless period of concentrated bliss—and Mr. Whiffleton, with his wife's permission, had just lighted a cigar, and was leaning back in a beatific state of enjoyment. The evening paper lay unheeded in a vacant chair, and the slipper stage not yet having settled down upon him, Mr. Whiffleton's feet, enclosed in new patent-leathers, reposed as comfortably as possible on a rest provided by his thoughtful bride.

"My dear," said Whiffleton, as the smoke curled peacefully upward, "we have not yet had our first quarrel."

"And I hope we never shall," replied Mrs. Whiffleton.

Whiffleton's answering smile betrayed a slight touch of superior wisdom united with its expansiveness.

"So do I," he observed, "but, unfortunately, I am afraid it will happen. I say I am afraid of it, and yet it is possible we can prevent it."

"What makes you think it will happen?"

"It generally does. Two natures, trying to adjust themselves to each other, must inevitably clash to a certain extent. Let us try to circumvent this."

Whiffleton leaned forward, and took his wife's hand. "Dearest," he said, earnestly, "I have been thinking over this matter, and I'm determined to forestall any trouble, if possible. Let's look ahead, and make up our minds what to do to prevent it."

Mrs. Whiffleton regarded her husband with a look of mild surprise.

"I don't quite know what you mean, dear," she said. "We love each other, I'm sure. Everything is all right."

"I know everything is all right; but it may not be. I'm likely any night to come home from business, tired out and cross. You may not understand my mood. Something may have gone wrong to irritate me. Such things happen."

"But why don't you wait till the time comes?"

"That's just it. I want to prevent it now. In case I should say something you don't quite understand, bear with me; control yourself; don't answer back."

"But if you were really cross, dear, you wouldn't expect me to submit to your mood, would you?"

"Why not? I shall do the same by you."

Mrs. Whiffleton looked a trifle annoyed. "It seems to me," she said, "that you are anxious about nothing."

"I'm not anxious," replied Whiffleton; "I'm simply exercising ordinary prudence. I want our married life to be a success."

"Well, there's no reason why it shouldn't be, so far as I am concerned."

"Did I say there was?"

"You implied it. You implied that I should be cross—that the time would come when I couldn't control myself."

"Nothing of the sort! I merely asked you to make an effort, to meet me half-way."

"Exactly. You insinuated that it would be necessary to do this. It was horrid of you."

"Horrid! What do you mean?"

"What I say."

Whiffleton assumed an air of patience. "Now, my dear, is the time for you to do just what I warned you about," he said. "Don't you see what I mean? Why, we are almost quarreling now!"

"Who began it?"

"I certainly didn't."

"You did. You have deliberately sat down here, and tried to pick a quarrel with me."

"How can you say such a thing?"

"Because it's true. You are a mean, contemptible, cross, hateful old thing, and I don't love you any more. I wish I hadn't married you! There!"

Whiffleton rose. "Very well, my dear," he said. "I'm sorry. But, remember, it's not my fault. At present, I'll leave you to yourself."

And, as his wife flounced out of the room, he said to himself, as he glanced at his watch:

"I hated to do it, but I simply had to get down to the club to-night and tell the boys all about the joys of newly married life."



TO VER

TO *Ver* I sing—that is, to Spring
 As Latin poets write it—
 She comes with mirth and song to earth,
 And scatters flowers to light it.

She sets the bard to work, and hard
 He keeps the pen in action,
 To sing her praise and all her ways
 Of wonderful attraction.

So, in these times of vernal rhymes,
 I toss this verse to thrill *Ver*,
 With joy to see how nicely she
 Supplies a rhyme for silver!

FELIX CARMEN.



NO QUESTION ABOUT IT

MRS. BENHAM—Well, if worst comes to worst I can keep the wolf away from the door by singing.

BENHAM—You can if he has a correct ear for music.

A MAN WHO NEVER MEANT ANYTHING

By Nellie Cravey Gillmore

A SMALL china clock ticked busily away on the mantel. Ten o'clock passed, eleven, twelve; and still another hour.

Cecilia rose stiffly from the chair in which she had sat and watched and waited, in a sort of lethargy, for three long hours. She took one or two mechanical turns up and down the room, then paused at an open window to look out into the night. Through the fretted sycamores a pale moon dashed restless patches of silver across her face, accentuating its unusual whiteness. She put up her arms, and rested her throbbing temples against her clasped hands.

How long she stood there she could not tell, but presently a burnt-out log parted and plunged into the ashes below, sending a last shower of sparks chimneyward. She started and turned at the sound. A few scattered bits of charred bark lay about the hearth-rug, and, with that inevitable attention to trivialities we have all known above the current of some deeper feeling, she stooped and brushed them off with painstaking care, and replenished the fire.

After a while, she crossed over to the piano and tried to play, but her fingers stuck to the keys as if they were held there by an invisible force. Her muscles commenced to ache, and a sense of suffocation gripped her throat. The dead quiet of the room pressed upon her like a physical burden.

At last, when dawn pierced the narrow window-panes with thin, blue streaks of light, she dropped wearily into a chair, overcome by sheer bodily exhaustion, and slept.

In a little while, a halting step echoed on the veranda, and the click of a latch-key roused her.

Langdon walked unsteadily into the room, and paused at the reading-table, his knuckles pressed heavily against the polished mahogany top. A defiant scowl settled between his brows as Cecilia rose and came over to where he stood.

"Well?" he demanded, in a thick voice.

"Well—what?" she smiled in a wonderful little fashion that women have, to hide all the bitterness and disgust that surged within her.

Langdon fumbled nervously with an agate pen-staff that lay on the table, and his eyes fell. Glancing up presently, he met his wife's clear, bright gaze, and flushed dull red. Cecilia crossed her hands loosely behind her, and leaned her shoulder against the sharp edge of the mantel-shelf. Her whole attitude breathed firmly suppressed emotion, and she tapped the floor restlessly with her foot as she waited for him to speak.

"I was just thinking," he said, insolently, after a long pause, "what fools women are."

Cecilia smiled inwardly at this sweeping generality, with its pointed allusion. "Yes," she assented, slowly; "yes."

Langdon flared at her passivity. He had expected tears, reproaches, anything—and had been prepared to parry them. He thrust both trembling hands into his pockets, and began to pace up and down the room.

"Why did you sit up?" he inquired, abruptly, stopping in front of her.

"Why? Why, to wait for you, of course, dear," she said; in a studiously gentle tone.

Langdon sneered. "I fully understand." He laughed, shortly. "To spy on me!" He made a quick, comprehensive gesture with one hand, resting the other on the back of a chair for support.

Cecilia stared at him dully, and the blood flamed to her face. She half opened her lips to speak, but checked herself, struggling for self-control.

After a while, she smiled faintly and laid her hand tenderly on his arm. "You are tired—excited, George, but it's—it's all right, isn't it? We mustn't quarrel now—when we never have quarreled. All of us make mistakes——"

"You are mighty right about that," he broke in, irritably. "So don't ever again make the mistake of sitting up all night for—for a man. Men detest that sort of thing."

He lighted a cigar, and sank heavily into a chair, taking long, placid puffs, and watching the circling wreaths of smoke with half-closed, complacent eyes.

A long silence followed. The clock on the mantel struck five.

Hurt to the soul, Cecilia stood, still and mute, her quivering hands locked hard for self-mastery.

Presently, Langdon got up and stood in an embarrassed fashion by her side. A wave of sudden tenderness swept over his face as he looked down at the bowed bronze head, and he placed a gentle hand on her shoulder. "Don't worry about it any more," he said, awkwardly; "I've been a brute, that's all—no, and a cad, besides. A fellow never knows——" He paused, without finishing his sentence, the contrition deepening in his eyes.

"Well?" She smiled a little, the bitterness quite gone, and now, for the first time, tears sprang to her eyes.

"I was going to say," he went on, musingly, "that a man never knows how dear his wife is to him until he is confronted by the possibility of losing

her." He laughed softly, and patted her head, lover-fashion.

After a little, he stooped and kissed her lips. Then he held her away from him for a second, and gazed gravely into the pale, tired face.

"You mustn't do this again—promise me," he said.

"Oh, no, of course not," she returned, in a vibrant little voice; "unless—unless——" Her lashes flickered, and she turned away.

Langdon caught her hands in his, and crushed them close. "Unless you have another opportunity?" he suggested, laughing. "Well, then, you won't, if that's all."

And one might have thought that he meant it.

Langdon made his way along the deserted avenue with that chalk-line precision that inevitably labels its subject. Somewhere in the neighborhood a clock struck three, and he paused under the glare of a gas-lamp to compare his time.

A few blocks further on, he stood in front of a tall, gray-stone house with darkened windows. After several minutes' bungling with the night-latch, he finally let himself in, and banged the door behind him.

At the threshold of the library, he struck a match and peered curiously about the abandoned room. An oath leaped to his lips. He sat down a moment on the edge of a chair to steady himself, and presently got up and passed on to his wife's sleeping apartment.

The door was partly ajar, and he felt his way cautiously to where she slept, leaning over to catch the sound of her breathing.

Several seconds passed, and she did not stir. He laid his hand on her shoulder, and shook her clumsily.

She started, sighing vaguely; then, to all appearances, slept soundly again.

With another imprecation, he turned on his heel and quitted the room.

His fury had partly sobered him, and, crossing directly to his desk in the

adjoining room, he turned on the light and sat down. Drawing paper and pencil before him, he dashed down the following:

"MY DEAR WIFE:

"At last you have forced the realization upon me that I no longer occupy the old place in your heart, and, rather than hold any other, I am going away forever.

"YOUR DEVOTED HUSBAND."

He sealed and directed it; and then, having thrust the note inside her door, left the house. "Perhaps that will

teach her a lesson!" he muttered, angrily, slamming the gate behind him.

When his last footfall had died away, Cecilia slipped quietly from the bed, and, tearing open the folded sheet, read his message by the light of breaking day.

For a long time she stood motionless, her fingers crushed mechanically against the paper.

"And the worst of it is," she said, bitterly, "he doesn't mean a word of it—he never means anything!"



"MY DREAMS ARE AT THY DOOR"

MY dreams are at thy door,
They beat with unheard hands;
Their cries thou heed'st no more
Than the spent wave on the sands.

My dreams are at thy door:
Night and Illusion give
(As they have given before)
The life they briefly live.

But, while they wait, outpour
Thine own, in fluttering line;
My dreams are at thy door—
Thy dreams—they seek not mine!

EDITH M. THOMAS.



MEN'S FASHIONS

HEADS are worn large in the early morning.
South Dakota ties are popular at Newport.
Spats are general in married circles.
Patent-leather pumps are worn by our best milkmen.
Collar buttons are scarce, as usual.
Cutaway coats are worn by bank cashiers.



TO kill time, many travel the pace that kills.

THE CHANGE

LIFE was so simple, ere you came
 To change its wonted scheme,
 To make the real an empty name,
 And only true the dream.

The shadowed days of dread and gloom
 Wherein our joys were one,
 Have been elate with song and bloom,
 And glorious with sun.

The lonely way wherein we went,
 The rain-swept, wind-swayed night,
 Were peopled with our heart's content,
 With star and moonshine light.

And since you went—oh, false and best—
 Too true this sign I mark;
 The crowded days are loneliest,
 The moonlit nights most dark.

JOHN WINWOOD.



MORE DIFFICULT TASK

"I," SAID Tenspot, with an air of superiority, "take things as they come."
 "That's all right," retorted Chadwick, "but it takes a higher philosophy to part with things as they go."



DISCRIMINATION IS NECESSARY

SIMILES should be chosen with great care. The man who would feel highly complimented if you said he had a heart of oak, would be likely to take offense at your opinion that he possessed a wooden head



IT is banal to tear a passion to tatters when one may cut it.

THE MAN OF SMILES

By Prince Vladimir Vaniatsky

THE old man stood silent at the door of the *pension*. His eyes wandered down the narrow street to where it merged into a broad avenue, arched with plane-trees in the fresh flush of their Spring leaves. A faint suggestion of a smile trembled at the corners of his mouth, though no one could have seen it. The old man was bearded, and he could smile to himself and the world be none the wiser.

But his eyes, turned toward the avenue, were wistful, almost tender, with his thoughts. He sighed, and suddenly grew half-ashamed of his sigh. The man who seldom sighs does it as he would commit a crime, stealthily, often only in the innermost chamber of his heart.

"Why do you sigh?" he heard a voice behind him ask. He did not need to turn. He knew every tone and timbre of the voice that spoke.

"I cannot always be 'The Man of Smiles,' little one," he answered, and turned his eyes to the girl who stood behind him. The girl was somber-eyed, and her lips drooped with a saddened expression.

"Child, what has hurt you?" he asked, and looked at her with his eyes alight.

"Nothing. Why should anything hurt me? But I do not mean just that," she hastily added. "I am worried about mother. She is not well."

"Ah, how is Mrs. Hardy this morning?" the old man asked.

"She has such a bad headache. She came down to breakfast, and then went back to bed."

"Come, child," the old man said; "I want you to go with me for a moment."

Together the couple hurried down the narrow little street, and out into the broad sweep of the avenue. The old man walked with an impetuous haste, the girl going with him on the light feet of youth. His destination was not far. A flower kiosk on a corner blossomed out with all the faint, fair flowers of Spring.

The young woman in the kiosk smiled a greeting to the two.

"This morning it will be narcissuses—that is, if they are from Montreux," the old man said, smiling.

"They are from Montreux, monsieur," the young woman declared, as she deftly made the flowers into a dainty bouquet.

"Come, child," said the old man; and the two, laughing, went down the street to the door of the *pension*.

"These are for Mrs. Hardy." The old man gave the flowers to the girl. As she opened her lips to utter a pretty expression of gratitude, the old man smiled, and cried: "Come, now, you should not be grateful. Quite the contrary; for, child, I have given you no flowers." Then he slipped outside the door, and drew it shut after him, holding it firmly by the knob so that the girl could not open it. After a minute, he heard her go up the stairs. Then his smile curled around his lips, and lighted up his eyes.

"Thank you, thank you," a voice came from an upper window; and the old man, looking up, saw the girl's head, the sun falling upon her hair, and bringing out forgotten tints of golden-red in its brown. Then the head drew back, and the old man opened the door and passed down the low hall to the room of Madame Moret. He knocked

softly at the door. Madame, herself, opened it.

"Pray be seated, monsieur." She brushed a chair, already scrupulously free from dust, and set it for him.

"It is just a small matter of business, madame." As he spoke, he gave her a little roll of notes.

"I thank you so much, monsieur," she modestly murmured, and wrote out a receipt for him.

"Is everything well, madame?"

Madame Moret looked up. The Man of Smiles seldom asked questions.

"Ah, yes, monsieur," she said; "only——"

The old man waited. Madame Moret made dots with her pen on the blotter.

"Only?" he queried, gently.

"The finance bothers me sometimes."

Madame Moret looked across the room to the window where a jug of burnished brass held some simple Spring flowers, and where an immense tabby-cat stretched herself, luxuriously, in the sun.

"Is it trouble within the *pension*?" the Man of Smiles asked.

"It is, monsieur," she responded. "Monsieur knows I am not hard-hearted. But I must pay my bills when they fall due." Madame Moret compressed her lips as though she had said a thing which it hurt her to utter.

"I understand, madame," the old man replied. Then he looked at her keenly.

"Do not worry, madame," he urged. It was not the words he spoke, but the manner of the speech that startled Madame Moret. She looked at his eyes, and saw they were more tender than usual. But, as she watched him, he rose from his chair.

"I am going to the rue Scribe, on business," he explained, "and if any one should ask for me, tell them to wait. I shall not be long away." Then he bowed punctiliously to her, and left the room.

Madame Moret looked at the blank door which closed behind him. Then her eyes returned to the columns of her account-book. They were opened

at a page headed, "*Mme Hardy et sa fille*." Madame Moret's heart stopped. She hoped the old man had not seen that page where the debits overbalanced the credits. Then she thought of the way Madame Hardy's cheeks flushed when she had asked her, very gently, for a little on her bill.

"I have too good a heart to be a successful business woman," Madame Moret murmured. But her eyes again fell on the brass jug gleaming in the sun, and the tender, fragrant flowers which it held. It is a bad thing to have a heart in business; but, oh, life is not business, for life is love, and love is not hard-hearted.

When the old man returned from the rue Scribe, his mouth curved happily beneath his beard. He swung his heavy walking-stick round and round with a joyous air, and his varnished boots lifted lightly from the pavement. Madame Moret even thought that M. Adams—for so the old man was called—was whistling a merry little tune from the *chantants*. But, then, it might have been some little gamin on the street. Madame had never heard M. Adams whistle.

Mrs. Hardy was in her place at luncheon. Her eyes were red and heavy. Yet, with a brave show of carelessness, she wore a couple of the old man's narcissuses pinned to the bosom of her black robe.

"I thank you so much for the flowers, Mr. Adams," she said to him, smiling. The Russian countess, who sat next to the old man, looked up quickly. He had never given her any flowers, and she was more handsome than the American woman. But Madame Trazine was indifferent. One man more or less in the world makes little difference—to a Madame Trazine.

The old man chatted happily as they sat at luncheon. The Hardys, Madame Trazine and Mr. Adams occupied the same little table, looking out over the court of the adjoining house.

"To-night," he said, "I am going to play the host, if you three will allow

me. We shall go for dinner to a restaurant in the Champs Elysées. Afterward, we shall go to a *café chantant*. Oh, the most proper one," he hastily added, as Mrs. Hardy opened her lips to speak. "And it is my birthday, you know, so you must not refuse me this little favor. My birthday is a time when people must do as I wish." And he laughed again, more happily than ever.

When the evening came, the little party was waiting for Mr. Adams in the parlor of the *pension*. Rose Hardy wore a simple dress of white that ruffled softly around her feet. The Countess Trazine was more ambitiously gowned, in a Summer robe of net spangled with iridescent spangles, and with a long, heavy silk cloak medallioned with silver stars. Rose Hardy had a simple cloth cape thrown over her shoulders. But it told Mr. Adams what he had never before known—that Rose Hardy's father had been an officer in the American army.

Mr. Adams had a surprise for them in the automobile which waited at the end of the street. It was a very handsome one, with a chauffeur in livery.

"I borrowed it," he said to Mrs. Hardy, slyly. "It belongs to my banker."

It was not yet dark, and the broad streets were springing into brilliant rows of light. Away to the east, the Eiffel Tower loomed against the sky, the last rosy clouds of the sunset outlining its gaunt black lines with merciless accuracy.

When the party reached the restaurant in the Champs Elysées, and were shown to the table reserved for them, Mrs. Hardy noted that covers were laid for yet another person. As she glanced at the plate, Mr. Adams looked at her with a quaint smile on his lips.

"The fifth guest is late," he said, and looked at his watch. But, as he spoke, a tall young man came swiftly toward them.

"Thank you so much, colonel, for

asking me," he said. But, as he turned to allow the old man to present him to the ladies, he held out both hands to Mrs. Hardy.

"Where have you been, dear friends?" he asked, looking intently at Rose Hardy.

"In Paris. Where did you suppose? You knew that was where we intended going when we left Rome."

"But you never let me know where you were," he chided, "and, if it had not been for Colonel Adams, I might never have seen you again."

"Stop quarreling, children, at my birthday feast," commanded the Man of Smiles. "When you are sixty-nine, you will want a peaceful company at your dinner-table." Then he laughed gaily, and the waiter came forward with the frozen bouillon.

Rose Hardy glanced across the table at the Man of Smiles. "You are very good to bring us here," she said.

Above them, great trees arched over, letting the pale light of the new moon filter through the leaves. Around the table roses and great, florid peonies bloomed on their native bushes.

"Where have you been, Billy?" Mrs. Hardy asked.

"Hunting all over Europe—for you. You never let me know what had become of you. Last week I rushed over to Milan, because there was a new American contralto billed to appear at La Scala. I was afraid you had let Rose go on the stage, after all."

"Indeed, sir, I could go if I wished—and could get somebody to take me." Rose raised her head independently. As she did so, she saw a tall woman coming through the trees, followed by a maid and a group of men in evening dress. The woman's gown was cut very low from the neck, and a network of pearls, cunningly devised, covered her throat, and lay caressingly on the sheen of her white bosom.

"Oh, here comes Firman, of the opera!" cried Rose Hardy. All heads turned quickly, and Billy Marshall looked bravely into Mlle. Firman's eyes.

"Ah, Billee!" carelessly cried Firman. Then she noticed Madame Tra-

zine. "Ah, *madame la comtesse!*" she exclaimed, purringly. "I have not seen you for so long a time."

"I have been away," returned the countess.

"Shall you be at Dieppe?" asked Firman.

"Perhaps," replied the countess. The great singer looked down at Billy Marshall.

"I want you to-morrow night, Billee," she murmured, and swept on.

Rose Hardy flushed deeply, and Billy awkwardly picked up a fork and would have taken his bouillon with it. Madame Trazine and Mr. Adams alone were composed.

"Firman should not sing Wagner," declared Adams.

"She is insolent," muttered the countess, so low that only Adams could hear her, and shrugged her bare shoulders.

In a second, Mrs. Hardy was chatting with Billy about old friends, and Rose joined with the countess and Mr. Adams in an animated discussion of the opera that year.

From Firman's table came laughter and the sound of glasses clinking. The young Duc de Deauxeau, whose recent attentions to Firman had caused much gossip, could be heard singing a song from the *cafés chantants*. It was a brilliant little bit, with words barbed with insinuations. Yet it could be as innocent as a baby's lullaby. It was not the meaning of the words, but the emphasis placed upon them which made suggestive the seductive flower-wreathed cup of vice. Billy flushed angrily, and gazed through the trees. Mr. Adams alone remained uninterested in the song. Mrs. Hardy and Rose were talking loudly to drown the words which came to them. The Countess Trazine was listening, interestedly, to the song. She smiled, slyly, to herself, as she saw how it annoyed Billy.

A passing waiter, drawn to the table by Mr. Adams's eye, bent low over him. A piece of paper and a coin slipped unnoticed from Adams's hand to the man. A second later, the waiter

glided through the trees to Firman's table, and handed the note to the young duke. No one had seen Adams write it. With the card upon his knee, the movements of his hand and pencil had been obscured by the napery of the table. The song died away in silence, though laughter still came from Firman's table.

"You are very clever," said the countess, in Adams's ear. He smiled, and bowed his head slightly. To a trained woman of the world, the whole scene was very apparent.

When they reached the *café chantant*, it took but a second for Firman and her party to follow them. Adams sat unmoved through three or four numbers on the programme. Then he leaned over to Mrs. Hardy, and murmured something in her ear.

"Mr. Adams suggests that we make the tour of the boulevards in the automobile," she said to the party.

"Come, let us go," cried the countess; and the five went out to the waiting machine.

Rose sat silent through the long drive over the smooth pavements and past the brilliant brasseries. Only when the automobile rumbled down the quais and across the Seine did she say much. Then she was telling of some quaint little volumes she had seen in an old bookseller's place. Billy and Mrs. Hardy sat on the other side of the *tonneau*, and Rose chatted mainly with the countess and Mr. Adams, who sat in front with the chauffeur, but so close that he could talk with Miss Hardy and the countess.

When the little party reached Madame Moret's *pension*, Billy lingered behind to speak with Rose.

"When may I call?" he asked. The countess was near enough to hear the question, and, when Rose hesitated to reply, she turned.

"Will you come to see me day after to-morrow, Mr. Marshall?" she asked. "I always have tea in the afternoon, and Rose sometimes comes in and chats with my few callers. Do come."

"Oh, thank you, madame," Billy answered, and his keen young eyes

showed his earnest gratitude. She tapped him on the shoulder with her fan, and then drew Rose into the house with her. As they went up the steps the girl caught her breath quickly.

"Why did you do it?" she asked. "I want nothing to do with Firman's men." Her mouth quivered.

"Hush!" said the countess. As they parted on the landing she slipped her arm over the girl's shoulder. "Make no mistakes, *mignon*," she said. Then, laughing, "Sweet dreams to you."

As the girl went slowly up the steps to the floor above, she repeated to herself, "Sweet dreams, sweet dreams, when Billy lets Firman command him like *that*."

There was a great deal of commotion in Madame Moret's *pension* on the following morning.

Mrs. Hardy was down to breakfast much ahead of the other boarders. She smiled happily at Madame Moret.

"I shall have a little bundle of notes for you as soon as I can go to my banker's," she said.

"Don't think I meant to be unkind yesterday morning," begged Madame Moret. "Only, there was a large bill to be met."

"Indeed, no, madame, you have been very kind to me. I shall never forget it."

Mrs. Hardy held a blue envelope in her hand, and in its upper left-hand corner it bore the letter-head of a great banking-house on the rue Scribe. Within it was the bank's cheque for a modest sum, and the information that the bank had been instructed to make a similar payment on the first of each succeeding year. The writers added that they had been entrusted with this payment by a person who wished to remain unknown, but who felt, in making it, that he was paying back a debt long due.

Mrs. Hardy's first thought had been to return the cheque, with the information that she was not one to receive money from anonymous sources. But Rose had recalled to her mother's mind that a man now prominent in

American finances was the one who had wrecked Major Hardy's small fortune.

"I am sure that it is from him, mother," the girl said. "There would be no one else to do this. And, as it is justly due from him, dearie, I think we really ought to take it. And then, mother, there is Madame Moret; she has been so obliging."

Mrs. Hardy was stubborn for the moment, but as she considered madame's bill and recalled her own delayed remittances, she finally agreed that she would accept the cheque, coming, as it seemed to do, from one who had once wronged her husband.

The Man of Smiles was again standing at the doorway of the *pension* when Rose Hardy came out.

"O Man of Smiles," she cried, "be thou happy with me!"

The old man turned to her. "To be happy with you would be the greatest pleasure that earth can hold. But what has happened?"

"The best fortune in the world," she returned; "only, I cannot tell you just what."

"Billy?" the old man asked.

"Billy!" The girl's heart sank. "Oh, no, it's—it's much better than that! It's mon-ey." But how could money be better than Billy? The lie caught in her throat as she uttered it. "Then, Billy's just an old friend. We played together as children. You know what that is, don't you?"

"But it has been a long time since I was young, child," the Man of Smiles told her. "That is why I love children like you—and Billy."

Rose wrinkled her nose at him. "Come," she said; "I am going to buy the flowers at the kiosque this morning. And, sir, if you'll promise to be very, very good, perhaps I'll get a little flower to put in your buttonhole. And, if you're better than good, I'll kiss the flower for you."

"How nice it is to be old!" exclaimed the Man of Smiles, "for you'd never say that to me if I were young like—Billy."

"Billy, Billy, always Billy! I don't

call that good, teasing me about an old friend."

Rose was thinking. To-night, Billy would be with Firman. With Firman! How often had she commanded him to come to her like that? How often? What had they talked about? What had they thought? Rose could not ask herself what they had done. Perhaps he had even kissed Firman's beautiful shoulders. She shuddered.

But here was the kiosk. Rose gathered a great sheaf of blossoms. She could afford to be lavish now, for the flowers were very cheap, and the little mother had a cheque for what was quite a good deal of money. Rose picked out a fresh bud, kissed it bashfully, and fixed it in Mr. Adams's buttonhole.

"Thank you so much, child," he said, and gazed down at her. The freshness of the Spring was in her blood, eternal youth was in her eyes and on her lips and cheeks. Ah, it is good to be young, with the fresh blood in one's veins, and the laughter of life upon the lips!

When they reached the *pension*, Rose had a little bouquet for Madame Moret and another for the Countess Trazine. While the Man of Smiles was away from his room, she tiptoed into it and placed a Dresden vase filled with roses upon his desk. Then she ran out, laughing guiltily.

Mrs. Hardy was back, and she was writing out some cheques.

"We'll go to André's in the morning, and order you some fresh gowns," she said to Rose. "In the afternoon, let's take the boat to St. Germain and have dinner there. We'll ask Billy Marshall and the Man of Smiles to go along."

"Not to-morrow afternoon, mother," urged Rose. "Let it be the day after; and suppose we have Countess Trazine instead of Billy. I've lost the card with his address."

"But Mr. Adams knows it."

"Mother, I don't want Billy."

"Rose!"

"I don't." The girl turned and faced her mother, bravely.

"What has Billy done?"

"You heard the way that Firman spoke to him. I don't want to have any man for a friend to whom Firman can speak as she did to him."

"Billy is young, Rose, and he may have been a little foolish."

"Perhaps that is it. But, mother, Billy was a sort of Sir Galahad to me all my life. And Sir Galahad wouldn't take such orders from a Firman."

When Billy Marshall called to see the Countess Trazine, he was shown up to her little parlor. It was a quaint room, with the time-blackened oak wainscoting. In a corner, a big *ikon* in enamel had a branched candelabrum burning before it. Fixed on a table near the window, a samovar was bubbling merrily. Madame Trazine, in a long green gown, trimmed with gold, like a colonel's uniform, came to him.

"I'm so sorry, Monsieur Marshall," she said, "but Rose will not be in this afternoon. However, will you not stay and have a cup of tea and a little chat with an old woman? Ah, boy, I am old! Thank you; I know I do not show it. But if I were to go without my masseur for a week, and did not know how to dress my hair, and did not rest several hours a day, I should look old."

Billy took a seat by the samovar.

"How long have you known Firman?" asked the countess.

"About four months. I came up to Paris from Rome. My cousin knew her. I met her. She is very, very beautiful. And she is so young and full of life."

The countess reached behind her, and drew a faded photograph from beneath a cushion.

"Do you remember the styles of twenty years ago?" she asked.

"I've seen photographs and prints of them," he answered, "and such funny things they were, too! I was much too young, then, to remember them very distinctly."

"Here's a photograph which might interest you," the countess replied. Billy took it, and studied it carefully. In the corner was scrawled, "Jeanne

Firman, 1878." The wonderful face of Firman with its audacious eyes was just the same as it was when Billy had seen it last the night before. But the antiquated costume, and the faded tones of the photograph were plain.

"Jeanne Firman was eighteen, then," said the countess, as she took the picture from Billy.

"She is wonderfully preserved," replied Billy, feeling that he must say something.

"It is a science we women must know," the countess parried.

"Such luck!" cried the countess, when Billy had departed. "I am getting even with that cat, now. She never knew she would play into my hands when she had that photograph taken three years ago for the new opera that has never been produced." The countess laughed a hard, cruel laugh to herself. Why not? It had been Firman who had won a man's love from Countess Trazine.

Mlle. Jeanne Firman was in the drawing-room of her apartment, practising over a new song. She stopped in the middle of a bravura passage. The effect did not please her. Again she tried it, but still with indifferent success.

"Bah," she said, "that is poorly done."

"You are very conscientious about your work, Jeanne," said a voice from the door. Jeanne turned suddenly.

"What is this?" she cried. "Marcelle had orders to admit no one."

"You must not forget that Marcelle was the man I gave you when I closed my apartment," the man said.

Jeanne rose from her chair, and ran to him like an iridescent-throated song-bird flying across the fields.

"You! You! You!" The three words rang the gamut from surprise to pleasure.

"As clever as ever, Jeanne!" the man said. "I always thought you a better actress off than on the stage."

"Not a new thought yet!" Jeanne cried. "Why must you repeat that

old phrase! It makes me feel so old. Come, sit down, tell me where you have been, what you are doing."

"And how much money have I left?"

Jeanne trembled angrily. "You are detestable."

The man laughed easily. "You are very unoriginal, Jeanne, for those were the last words I heard you utter."

"Come, come, we must stop fencing," cried Jeanne, "and talk like old friends."

But the man had sprung to his feet. On a table near him was a large photograph. He took it in his hands, and broke it in a dozen pieces.

"Don't, don't!" cried Jeanne. "That is the only portrait I have of my Billee."

"And the last," the man stormed, "and it's the last you see of Billy. Do you understand, Jeanne?"

"No, no!"

"Of course it is. I have said so. Billy is going to marry—marry an American girl. American men like Billy don't have friends after they marry; they are good men."

"Did Billee send you?"

The man took a cigarette from a case on the table.

"Take one, Jeanne; it will quiet your nerves." Then he went on: "Billy did not send me. I am no man's Mercury."

"You are so strange this afternoon," Jeanne murmured.

"It's a hobby of mine these days. Come, Jeanne, take a smoke, and listen to me. Billy is very much in love with this American girl. I don't need to give her name. About five months ago, in Rome, the girl and her mother discovered that they had lost nearly all their money. They left Rome and came here, and went to a quiet little *tenison*. They hoped that things would change after a time. Then they would let Billy know where they were. The girl's mother is proud. She did not want Billy to know they were in trouble. But the trouble lasted months. Billy started out to hunt them. He found you, instead. You are an interesting creature, Jeanne; but

he loves this girl. She heard you speak to him two nights ago at the Champs Elysées. It was a flaunting of your imagined possession of Billy."

"I did it to hurt Madame Trazine," Jeanne said, in excuse.

"And very nearly broke the girl's heart, Jeanne."

"But where were you then?"

"I was the old man with the beard at Billy's table."

"But he was very old, and you are young."

"I am fifty, Jeanne. Shaven, I look forty; bearded, almost seventy. It is my white hair that makes the change."

"Well, what has all this got to do with Billee?"

"Everything. Billy is to marry the girl in the English church, on the avenue d'Alma. I do not know just when. Only, you must not see Billy when he comes to-night. You must send him a note now, telling him not to come."

"I won't. I love him." There was an ominous sincerity in Jeanne's tones.

"Come, Jeanne, you have drunk long and deep of the goblet of love. Let some one else have a taste from it. Don't poison the girl's first draught from the brimming cup."

"Adam!"

The man went to her, and laid his hand on her wonderful hair.

"Listen, Jeanne; let me tell you of the girl. I went to the *pension*, an old man, bearded, shabby, apparently poor. Of all the guests, there were three who were kind to me—the girl and her mother and Madame Trazine—she did not recognize me. The girl was good to me when I was sick. Later, she called me the Man of Smiles. She is a child, Jeanne, a child with but one love, a love as strong and true as life can hold. Let her be happy!"

"And what do you get out of it all?" Jeanne asked.

"It gives me something to smile about," the man answered.

Jeanne gathered the broken fragments of Billy's photograph from the floor. She kissed them convulsively. Then she lighted a candle, and burned the fragments, one by one.

"You are good, Jeanne," the Man of Smiles said.

"It is hard to be good when one loves as I have loved," replied Jeanne. Then she went back to the piano, and tried the bravura passage once more. It melted into sobs.

The Man of Smiles touched her head softly. "God bless you, dear," he said, tenderly, and went forth into the world with a smile on his lips for Rose, and a tear in his heart for Jeanne.



THE SPENDTHRIFTS

NOW that it is this time next year,

I am bereft of all I had,

And thought to keep, a year ago,

To make me sad or glad,

And I must get me all things new—

Faiths, loves, and friendships, too.

I loved so well this time last year,

And I believed all things so well—

My friend, my faith, my hope, my love,

And all that they could tell—

It had been worth their while to save

One heart to be their slave.

FANNY KEMBLE JOHNSON.

MR. OUTERBRIDGE'S INEFFICIENCY

"JOHN, go down to the office, and tell them to send up our trunks this instant," said Mrs. Outerbridge to her husband, very shortly after they had been shown to their room in the hotel.

"What's the matter with ringing for a bell-boy, and sending him?" asked Mr. Outerbridge.

"Because they'll be sure to send the wrong ones then," explained Mrs. Outerbridge, with conviction. "You know them, and you can see that we get the right ones."

"It's been nothing but trunks, trunks, trunks, ever since we started," grumbled Mr. Outerbridge, reluctantly pulling on his coat. "If we ever go away again we'll carry everything we need in our pockets, and don't you forget it."

"I'm awfully sorry, Martha," said he, when he returned from his errand, "but—er—the truth is—er—the clerk says that—er—the fact is—er—well, I'm sorry to say that our trunks aren't here just yet, but there's no occasion to worry, for—"

"There, John Lossing Outerbridge, what did I tell you!" exclaimed Mrs. Outerbridge, with a cross between exultation at her vindication as a prophet and despair at the loss of the trunks. "Haven't I been telling you right along that you were sure to lose those trunks?"

"Yes, Martha, you sure have," acknowledged Mr. Outerbridge. "But I did check 'em for here all right. What more could I do? And, besides—"

"What more? Didn't you refuse to go and make sure they were put in the baggage car, as I wanted you to?" demanded Mrs. Outerbridge, scornfully. "And didn't you refuse at the junction to go and see that they were properly transferred? And didn't you refuse to go and see that they were taken off the train after we got here? What more? If you hadn't been as obstinate as a pig, and as supine as a—as an angle-worm, we'd have those trunks right here now."

"Yes, I did refuse to make a variegated assortment of intermeddling asses of myself all the way here," retorted Mr. Outerbridge, bitterly. "And neither did I ride the four or five hundred miles between home and here, squatted like an idiotic hop-toad on those trunks to see that they didn't fall off the train. But, as I was going to say—"

"That's just what I'm saying," interrupted Mrs. Outerbridge, triumphantly. "If you weren't just too lazy and incapable and careless to take the most ordinary precautions, as I wanted you to, we'd have those trunks now, instead of having to turn right around and go home because they're lost, and we haven't anything to wear."

"Oh, nonsense, Martha," said Mr. Outerbridge, impatiently. "They'll be here all right in a little while. As I've started to say half-a-dozen times—"

"Oh, yes! Of course, they'll be here all right in a little while," sneered Mrs. Outerbridge. "Why, I don't suppose you've even telegraphed to that railroad to send that train back with those trunks instantly or you'll hold them responsible in heavy damages!"

"No, I haven't," replied Mr. Outerbridge, somewhat warmly. "It was another opportunity to make a gibbering jackass of myself, but I've let it slip. Why, Martha, I haven't even insisted that the solar system stand still till we get our trunks; simply because, as I've been trying to tell you ever since I came

into the room, they're down at the depot, and the baggage-wagon will bring 'em up on its next trip."

"Well, what are you standing around here with your hands in your pockets for, then?" demanded Mrs. Outerbridge, indignantly. "You rush down to the office this instant, and go along with the wagon; and be sure that the man does bring them here. You've lost those trunks once, and now you can just make up your mind to see that you don't do it again this trip."

ALEX. RICKETTS.



A THEATRE PARTY

SHE—Say, dear, will you take me to the theatre with you to-night?

HE—Why, I don't know. (*I'll put up a bluff about its being too late to get tickets.*) Have you got the tickets, dear?

SHE—No, not yet. Is it too late?

HE—I'm afraid it is. (*Here's where I make good. It will be just the same as if I took her.*) I happen to know there isn't a seat left.

SHE—Have you been inquiring?

HE—(*Gee whiz, she suspects me of going off myself. Foxy!*) Certainly not, darling. I heard Smith say so this afternoon. He tried all over town to get seats. (*Here's where I get in my fine work.*) What in the world did you suggest such a thing for?

SHE—Why? Would you go if you could?

HE—Would I go! (*What a chance she has given me!*) Why, sweetheart, I'm dying to go. What did you mention the theatre for, anyway? I hadn't thought about it until you spoke. Hang the luck! I feel just like having a good time—with you. (*That'll make her feel good.*) Wouldn't it be nice? A good play, all by ourselves, and then——

SHE (*breathlessly*)—What then?

HE—(*Oh, this is easy.*) Oh, then we'd have a nice little supper. Oh, why did you mention it! It makes me sick. Now we'll have to stay home and mope. I feel just in the mood. Oh, if we only had a couple of seats!

SHE (*clapping her hands*)—You dear! We have! We have!

HE—(*Heavens! am I caught?*) What do you mean?

SHE—I mean this. This morning early I reserved two fine ones over the telephone. Come, dear, there isn't a moment to lose!



A MISSPENT YOUTH

SOME people are fast in order to make up for lost time.